

# Christian Orient

SEPTEMBER  
1987



## EDITORIAL

CHURCH AND EUCHARIST IN ST. EPHREM — *Fr. Sylvester*

CHAVARA'S VISION OF A CHRISTIAN FAMILY

— *Fr. George Kaniarakath C. M. I.*

THE INDIAN MIND AND ORIENTAL MYSTICISM

— *G. Arayjaniyil C. M. I.*

— *J. Aerthayil C. M. I.*

## DOCUMENTATIONS

## BOOK REVIEWS

## NEWS

# CHRISTIAN ORIENT

An Indian Journal of Eastern Churches for Creative  
Theological Thinking.

## EDITORIAL BOARD

### Section Editors

Ecclesiology	Dr. Xavier Koodapuzha,
Spirituality	Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara
Liturgy	Dr. Jacob Vellian
Ecumenism	Dr. Geevarghese Chediath
News & Documentation	Dr. Wilson Ukken
Book Reviews	Dr. Thomas Vellilamthadam
Managing Editor	Dr. Thomas Mannooramparampil

## SPIRITUALITY

### CONTENTS

Editorial	103
Church and Eucharist in St. Ephrem <i>Fr. Sylvester Kanjiramukalil O. I. C.</i>	110
Chavara's Vision of a Christian Family <i>Fr. George Kaniarakath C. M. I.</i>	118
The Indian Mind and Oriental Mysticism <i>Dr. Gabriel Aranjaniyil C. M. I.</i> <i>Dr. James Aerthayil C. M. I.</i>	125
Documentation	138
Excerpts from the message of His Eminence Card. Lourdusamy Catholic Bishops' Conference of India	140
Book Reviews 141, Books Received 144, News 146	

---

September

Vol. VIII

No. 3

---

Copyright : Christian Orient Trust, Kottayam 1986.

Manuscripts and Book Reviews are to be sent to the Managing Editor, Christian Orient Trust, P. B. 1. Vadavathoor, Kottayam - 686 010. Kerala, India.

Annual Subscription: Indian : Rs. 20/- Foreign : \$ 15/- by air mail,  
\$ 10/- by sea mail

## EDITORIAL

### Mar Thoma Margam and Evangelization

#### Introduction

*Margam* is a Sanskrit word (now used in several other Indian languages too) that signifies the "way of life" or "life-style", especially of a religious nature. By *Mar Thoma Margam* we mean the particular *Christian life-style*, introduced in India by *Mar Thoma*, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus.

In the 16th century, however, during the encounter between the Thomas Christians of India and the Portuguese colonizers, we come across several disputes on the nature and authenticity of what the Portuguese called the "Law of Thomas" and the "Law of Peter". One of the ten points to which the Archdeacon, the then ecclesiastical administrator of the Thomas Christians, was forced by the Portuguese Archbishop of Goa to subscribe, before the synod of Diamper (1599) was, "to confess that the *Law of Thomas* be the same as the *Law of Peter*". The phrase *Law of Thomas* is, in fact, a western Portuguese expression for the deeper Indian name, the *Mar Thoma Margam*.

During the early decades of the contact between these two Christian communities, the said "Laws" or "Margams" do not appear to have been a bone of any contention. Several times during those decades, they had even inter-communion in sacraments and Sacramentals, including the most holy Eucharist. Gradually the Portuguese authorities (civil, military and religious) began to realize that it was not easy for them to make the Thomas Christians conform to the western Latin style of Christian life. Hence they started attributing "Nestorian heresy" to the Thomas Christian life-style and labelled it as opposed to the "Law of Peter". But, the very fraternal welcome that was accorded to the Portuguese people by the Thomas Christians, as well as their attachment to the See of Peter is a clear proof that the "Law of Thomas" was in no way opposed to the "Law of Peter". At the same time, the Thomas Christians were fully convinced of the difference between them and the Portuguese in their faith expressions.

#### Mar Thoma Margam

What then was that "Law of Thomas" which, as stated above, was not opposed to but different from, the "Law of Peter"? It is the *Mar Thoma Margam*, that Mr. Giani Zail Singh, then President of India, described as "Christian in religion,

Oriental in worship and Indian in culture" (Inaugural Address, Paurastya Vidya Pitham' Kottayam, October 26, 1983). He was, infact, citing the words of the greatest Indian ecclesiastical luminary of the 20 th century, the late Rev. Dr. Placid J. Podipara cmi, himself a Thomas Christian. The president did not forget to add that "Christianity in India dates back to the days of St. Thomas, one of the original disciples of Lord Jesus" and had flourished here "adding a new dimension to India's rich cultural heritage". Thus the then president of India declared openly that by committing themselves totally to Jesus Christ and by expressing their faith through the Oriental style of Christian worship, the Thomas Christians have only enriched the cultural heritage of India. In other words, he confirmed once again the conviction of several other prominent Statesmen of India like Dr. Radhakrishnan, Jawaharlal Nehru and the others that the Thomas Christian life-style, namely, the *Mar Thoma Margam*, is part and parcel of India's rich cultural heritage. Christian faith never destroys cultural elements; it only enriches and ennobles the various cultures.

In this connection, we gratefully recall the present Pope John Paul II, declaring that the special Thomas Christian life-style in India, i. e., the *Mar Thoma Margam*, is "Eastern and authentically Indian ... which for centuries has been a marvel of Christian witness in fidelity to its primitive (early) faith and to its legitimate tradition". This recognition from the universal Church came during the *ad-limina* visit to Rome of the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara bishops on August 29, 1980. Here again the Pope emphasises the identity and individuality, in culture and worship of the Thomas Christians.

### **Margam-Ecclesiology**

We could trace the origin of the Thomas christian *Margam Ecclesiology* to the dialogue between the Apostle St. Thomas and Lord Jesus during the 'farewell address', as it is recorded, by St. John the Evangelist: Lord we do not know where you are going; how (then) can we know the way?, asked St. Thomas. "I am the Way, the truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by me" (*Jn 14, 5-6*), replied Jesus.

Jesus Christ is the unique Mediator between God and mankind. He redeemed us all through his historical life, death and resurrection. But our salvation is a process, in time and will be completed only at the end of time. The Church's role in the economy of salvation is to carry on the salvific act of Jesus in the dimension of history. Thus the *Church* is to be seen as the "Way" or the "*Margam*" along which the human pilgrimage to the heavenly Father proceeds. This is, in fact, the key-note of *Margam-Ecclesiology*.

The Church that continues Jesus Christ finds its concrete embodiments in and through the several *individual Churches*. "The Holy Catholic Church, which is the mystical Body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same Sacraments and the same government. They combine into different groups, which are held together by their hierarchy, and so form particular Churches or Rites" (OE 2). It will be readily admitted that what exist in reality are the particular or individual Churches, and their intercommunion in the personality of the Vicar of Christ alone constitutes in fact, the Universal Church. Thus the *Communio-Ecclesiology*, very well developed after Vatican II appears to be a good substantiation of the age-old *Margam-Ecclesiology* of the Thomas Christians.

*Mar Thoma Margam*, the concrete ecclesial existence of the St. Thomas Christians of India in all its specific details is the unique sign of salvation for them. But they never consider it to be an exclusive sign of salvation; it is readily granted that several other *Margams* of salvation can exist, owing allegiance to the same faith. Far from being scandalized with such different *Margams* of salvation, the Thomas Christians are always happy and ready to welcome, encourage and help them by all means. This they consider to be a manifestation of their common and universal faith in Jesus Christ the only Mediator.

### **Mar Thoma Margam and Evangelization**

*Mar Thoma Margam*, being a full-fledged Apostolic individual Church, must also exhibit its own specific missionary charism. In fact, history shows that this Church was always a vigorous missionary community. Before the Middle Ages, she was fairly wide-spread all over the Indian sub-continent. With the help of her sister Churches in Persia, Mesopotamia and Edessa, she, too was able to send her missionaries to several neighbouring countries including Srilanka and China (cfr. Mar Abraham MATTAM, *The Indian Church of St. Thomas Christians and her Missionary Enterprises Before the Sixteenth Century*, Kottayam 1985).

According to several sources, the "Thomite Churches", namely, the individual Churches in the heritage of St. Thomas the Apostle, i. e., the Churches of India, Persia, Mesopotamia and Edessa, comprised *two-thirds of the whole Christianity* at the time of the Muslim invasions. This must be the result of an adventurous and vigorous missionary activity undertaken by these Churches during the early centuries. The personality of St. Thomas the Apostle and the singular character of his commitment to Jesus, as drawn by St. John the Evangelist, ought to be considered the authentic inspiration of this special missionary charism (cfr. Varghese PATHIKULANGARA, *Resurrection, Life and Renewal*, Bangalore-Kottayam 1982, pp. 7-10). The Apostle is pictured in the Gospel (*Jn* 11, 1-16; 14, 1-11; 20, 19-29) as an *ardent and adventurous lover of Jesus*—the distinctive trait of a Christian missionary. The Thomas Christians have, surely, inherited it from their Apostle and father in faith.

### **European Missionaries**

In the 16th century, the European colonizers, the civil and military authorities together with the missionaries, were busy monopolizing the trade routes as well as the missionary enterprises in the East. Gradually, they and their successors managed to contain the "Thomas Christians of all India and its confines" within an exiguously small area in and around the Metropolitan See of Angamaly. This was less than 0.4% of the whole land of India. Outside this drastically restricted area, one could evangelize and convert people only to the Latin Rite. This was the "Indian context" after the so-called Synod of Diamper in 1599. Due to this strange ecclesiastical house-arrest in their own fatherland, many of the Thomas Christians were forced to bid farewell to their own Apostolic heritage, namely, the *Mar Thoma Margam*, and adopt the *Margam* of the western Latin Church, only for doing mission work. It may be amazing for foreigners to know that as a result, more than 70% of the missionary personnel working today throughout the Latin Rite Dioceses and institutions of India, are drawn from among the Thomas Christians! It is well worth pondering over this glaring anomaly in Indian Christianity.

## Vatican II

Vatican II can be considered a land-mark in the re-recognition of *communio-ecclesiology* which the Eastern traditions have always upheld. This is reflected also in the concept of Evangelization. Thus the Council decreed: "Therefore these Churches (the different individual Churches) are of equal rank, so that none of them is superior to the others because of its Rite. They have the same rights and obligations, even with regard to the preaching of the Gospel in the whole world, under the direction of the Roman Pontiff" (OE 3). According to the commentators of this Vatican document, "by stressing the equal dignity of the different Catholic Rites, the Council condemns clearly the theory of those who, mostly in the 18th century, taught that the Roman Rite enjoyed some kind of precedence over the others". The official commentator of it has the following explanation too to add: "The real reason why the right to preach the Gospel, that is, the right to engage in missionary activity, is especially mentioned among the rights and obligations of all the individual Churches is to be traced to the situation in India, where the Malabar Church, which has a large surplus of priests, was until recently only permitted to convert people to the Latin Rite". It is remarkable and regrettable that this blatantly anomalous situation forced upon the Thomas Christians during the colonial period continues to the present day, even after political independence has been won!

Even before Vatican II, the Holy See had re-recognized the missionary charism of the Syro-Malabar Church as an Apostolic individual Church, when on March 31, 1962 the Exarchate of Chanda was entrusted to the CMI Religious Institute of this particular ecclesial heritage for mission work according to this Oriental ecclesial tradition.

In spite of all these, the Latin Hierarchy in India and its theologians could not even understand (or pretended not to) the *communio-ecclesiology* so well emphasized in the Council. So many discussions and arbitrations went on this issue in the *Indian context*, i. e., colonialism-perpetuating-context, for the last twenty-three years; so much so that the Pope himself, who is the universal Pastor and the sign of ecclesial communion, was forced to intervene in it. The recent Papal Letter of May 28, 1987 to the Bishops of India is yet another land-mark in the history of this vexed question. We hope that the Latin Bishops of India will not dare to ignore the directives given to them in this powerfully-worded Pastoral Letter.

### A Challenge to the Thomas Christians

The Papal Letter is also a challenge to the Thomas Christians for self-examination. Have they ever made a serious and systematic search into their special missionary charism and missionary activities? Not at all, it appears! Vatican II had already asked all Easterners "to aim always at a more perfect knowledge and practice of their rites, and if they have fallen away due to circumstances of times and persons, they are to strive to return to their ancestral traditions" (OE 6). Have the majority of the Syro-Malabarians given any consideration to this explicit directive of the Council? Is it not a pity that they are still disputing over the text of their basic celebration, namely, the text for the Eucharistic celebration? Without restoring and renewing the liturgical celebrations of this individual Church according to the mind and

directives of the Council and without a spontaneous expression of their particular ecclesial heritage in and through their authentic liturgical rites, what kind of mission work are they going to offer?

Since 1962 several mission dioceses have been entrusted to the Syro-Malabar Church for doing mission work in her own ecclesial heritage. But one may reasonably call in question the ecclesial quality of the mission work in all those areas. We are bound to ask a few questions in this connection. Are the missionaries there, including the Bishops who lead and guide the mission work, aware and convinced of their own particular ecclesial patrimony? Do they themselves live according to their own particular ecclesial heritage, i. e., the *Mar Thoma Margam*, in the missions? Or, are they concerned only with external achievements such as educational institutions conducted, social and cultural programmes organized, developmental schemes executed, churches, chapels, convents, etc., built, and sometimes, even, with the number of baptisms given? Except for isolated cases in some mission areas, I am, indeed, disinclined to be optimistic! Hence, a concerted attempt to learn and live authentic heritage of the *Mar Thoma Margam* is a study of the Thomas Christian Missiology and a will to follow out its method in one's own missions.

### Sharing through Living

In this connection, I would like to set out what seems to me the specific traits of the Thomas Christian Missiology. *Sharing through Living* seems to be the preferred method of evangelization according to the *Mar Thoma Margam*. When we delve deep into the faith expressions of the Thomas Christians, they show themselves as "conscious Christians" in contrast to mere "ritual or routine Christians". They have tried their best to live according to the commitment they had made to Jesus Christ through their Apostle St. Thomas. They were not deterred by adverse circumstances in professing and practising their religion. At the same time, it has never been their practice to force anyone through external means to embrace their Christian life-style; if on the other hand anybody, attracted by their distinctive *life-style*, desired to follow it, they used to admit him readily to their community. This made the Thomas Christians of Kerala survive as a distinct community in the vast ocean of all-absorbing Hinduism, militant Islam, and forced latinization by western Christians.

### Religious Tolerance

Religious tolerance stands out as one of their principal virtues. The Thomas Christians never considered the other religions a threat to Christianity; nor did they ever think of deceiving or persuading others by making undesirable and unlawful accommodations or adjustments or compromises in their own faith expressions. They always kept the best relationship with their neighbours of other religions. In social or cultural or political sphere the Thomas Christians fully co-operated with their brethren of other religions and creeds. Even after condemnation of such relations by the Synod of Diamper (1599), they continued and still continue to foster them with their brethren of other faiths.

### Integration to the Community

The Thomas Christians seem to have enjoyed all the privileges and ranks of the nobility in the country. They themselves formed into a special

group (caste), directly responsible only to the King. Hence, there was the necessity of accommodating or elevating the new converts to the privileged position they enjoyed in society. Four families – Cotur, Cataval, Onamthuruth and Narimattam – were specially charged with the task of helping the new converts (cfr. British Museum, London, Add. MS. 9855, f. 86). Those who were converted from different castes and grades, were all considered and respected as the children of the same father. The account of Cathanar Thomman PAREMMAKKAL, who accompanied Malpan Cariattil during his historic journey to Lisbon, Rome and other European countries in the second half of the 18th century, is a valuable source in this regard. He wrote in his travelogue *Varthamanappusthakam*, which is considered to be a unique contribution to the Malayalam literature by as follows:

“What shall we say of converts? What do you (the European missionaries) think? Do you think that the Christians whom your predecessors saw in Malabar had come from your country, Europe? No. No. Without anybody's telling them, all are aware that they were Malabarians who had accepted the holy faith. It is a fact that before you and your forefathers came to Malabar there were in Malabar those who announced the faith”.

“We have, therefore, to take into account the difference between the converts of those olden days and those of modern times. In olden days the people belonging to the honourable, to the prominent and also to the poor families, houses and races of Malabar generally used to accept the holy faith with no aversion or dislike for it. Those who accepted it, as children of the same father, procured everything needed for soul and body and for the whole community, in the spirit of Christian charity and unity without any quarrel or misunderstanding. But after you and your predecessors set foot in Malabar, because of your evil behaviour and unworthy actions, even the holy faith has suffered infamy and injury at the hands of the gentiles. All are aware that no prominent man is converted now. Those who are converted are the poor who could not practise their former religion since they had defiled themselves by eating forbidden foods as they had nothing else as food or drink, or who have done some other things forbidden by their religion. As these converts, by the reason of the acts mentioned above, had become outcasts, you have, by your tricks and deceipts, employed them to weaken the strength and the unity of the Malabar Nazranis. For, you have kept them as separate groups calling some *Mundukar*, some *Margakar* and some *Kuppayakkars*. You have also given them another Rite and different customs. You have thereby created quarrels and confusion among the people of Malabar who are of the same flesh and blood. No one can heal these quarrels, as a result of which all have become your slaves” *Varthamanappusthakam*, Or. Chr. An. 190, Roma 1971, pp. 262-63).

The exotic life-style of the European missionaries, their emphasis on the number of baptisms rather than the personal integrity of the baptized, the perpetuation of classes and castes even within the Christian community, the introduction of the Latin Rite in addition to the *Mar Thoma Margam* which was there from the time of Apostle St. Thomas, the enforcement of western customs and manners, etc., were disturbing cross currents in the placid and even flow of the Thomas Christian missionary charism. This strange situation continues to the present day. The modern Thomas Christians are duty bound to radically revise it and make progress according to the genius of the *Mar Thoma Margam*.

First of all, they are to become "conscious Christians", namely, Christians who understand and live their particular ecclesial heritage in and through their own authentic liturgical spirituality. With regard to the social, political and cultural set-up, they are to be one with the local community, ennobling and enriching them as needed. A missionary ought to have a mastery over the local language even to its minute dialectal details. A Syro-Malabar or Chaldeo-Indian missionary ought to communicate himself to his neighbours as an "*authentic Thomas Christian*" rather than an impersonal universal Christian or Catholic, or a social worker or an educationist or a politician or a programme director or cultural promoter and so on. The "Indian folk" are in search of *authentic religious men*. Let the "Thomas Christian missionaries" satisfy this hunger and thirst of the folk first, then everything else will be added to their work by the Lord Jesus.

### Congratulations to the Missionaries!

This year the Thomas Christians are celebrating the silver Jubilee of the re-recognition of their missionary charism as an individual Church of Apostolic origin, namely, of the erection of Chanda Exarchate on March 31, 1962 for mission work in the Syro-Malabar ecclesial heritage. In this connection, we congratulate all the Thomas Christians, involved directly in the mission work and pray for their success in the Kingdom of God. We equally request them to review in retrospect and judge whether they have come up to the expectations of the mother Church, especially, in bearing witness to the *Mar Thoma Murgam*. They are not isolated individuals in the missions; the whole Thomas Christian ecclesial community is behind them in all vicissitudes. The recent Papal Letter of May 28, 1987 to the Indian Bishops is a boost to them, as well as to every "conscious Christian" in India and abroad.

\* \* \* \*

We are, indeed, grateful to the contributors of this issue. The article, *Indian Mind and Oriental Mysticism*, is an attempt to find out the noble traits in Hindu mysticism and to see how far the Orientals in India have assimilated them. This article comes as the combined effort of two specialists in the corresponding fields: Rev. Dr. Gabriel Aranjaniyil CMI, a specialist in Hinduism and Rev. Dr. James Aerthayil CMI, in the spiritual heritage of the Thomas Christians, both professors in the Dharmaram Vidya Kshethram, Bangalore. Rev. Sylvester Kanjiramukalil OIC leads us through the ecclesiological and Eucharistic insights of St. Ephrem, while Rev. George Kaniarakath CMI enriches us with an exegetical and pastoral analysis of the first letter of the Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara to the faithful of Kainakary, his own parish.

Finally, I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to all who have most willingly collaborated with me in bringing out this issue of the *Christian Orient*.

Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram  
September 8, 1987  
The Nativity of Jesus' Mother

Editor  
Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara CMI

# Church and Eucharist in St. Ephrem

In St. Ephrem we do not find any systematic treatment on Church and Eucharist, just as his other treatises on Theology. This is simply because Ephrem is not a systematic theologian, or one who is continually seeking for definitions. So it is not proper to try to understand him according to the scholastic categories. Christ, for example, when he taught, drew parables and symbols from the ordinary life of the people. The fish and the animals, the trees, the crops, and whatever he came in touch with, were used as exhibits in teaching. Like his master St. Ephrem also is typically semitic in his thinking. In that period of five hellenisation he stands out as the true representative of the semitic Christianity. He synthesised very beautifully the science of linguistics with a vast richness of imagery and presented his ideas with artistic perfection. "Among the Syrian poet of this period (fourth century A. D.) one stands out head and shoulders above all the others, St. Ephrem, described recently as 'the greatest poet of the patristic age and, perhaps, the only theologian poet to rank besides Dante'."<sup>1</sup>

## Some O. T. Types for Church and Eucharist

Since typology is the method of St. Ephrem in his spiritual and theological treatises, let us start with some O. T. types of the Church and Eucharist.

Commenting on Ex. 13:19 ie; Joseph's bones which Moses took back to Caanan, Ephrem says that the corpse of Joseph amidst the Israelites was a type of the Eucharist in the Church.

"For forty years there travelled  
a corpse in the camp;  
There was depicted for the Church  
in which is daily proclaimed  
the death of him who gives life to all  
that was the cross of Life".<sup>2</sup>

Here the Eucharist is symbolised as the proclamation of Christ's death recalling I Cor. 11:26 'as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'. Just as the bones, which were with the Israelites for forty years, were a source of strength and inspiration, the Eucharist which is celebrated every day, is an everlasting source of grace and strength for the Church. The last sentence, probably only an elaboration of the previous phrase, shows how Christ, though crucified, (as therefore typified by Joseph's dead bones) lives and gives life to the Church.

1. Brock S. 'The Harp of the Spirit', studies supplementary to *Sobornos* No. 4, p. 6.
2. *Nisibian Hymns* 48, 6; cf. R. Murry, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, London 1977, p. 79.

In *Hymns on the Unleavened Bread* 6, 6 he points out the Eucharist in the Church as the anti-type of the Passover bread in Egypt:

"The Church has given us living bread  
In place of the unleavened bread which Egypt gave".

In the *hymns preserved in Armanian*, the tabernacle of the O. T. appears as a type of the Eucharist in the Church:

"Moses built a tabernacle in the desert for the God-head;  
Because he dwelt not in their hearts, he shall dwell in the holy of holies  
For the Gentiles the Church was built, as a gathering for prayers  
..... and by his power, which has to dwell in the bread,  
he enters and rests in us".<sup>3</sup>

Ephrem also finds a type for the Church and the Eucharist in Noah's Ark<sup>4</sup>. "Yea the Ark of living creatures for Our Lord looked in a type; for He should build the Holy Church, where in souls find a refuge"<sup>5</sup>. According to Ephrem all the mysteries of the Church were pre-figured in this Ark. After admitting all the animals and birds Noah with his family entered the Ark with the bones of Adam, which he placed at its centre. This is a type of the Eucharist in the Church<sup>6</sup>.

Further, we find commenting on Joshua 4:13 ‘Asher, his land is good, and he shall give food to kings’ Ephrem comments: “This is the Church which gives absolution with the Medicine of life, not only to kings but also to all the hosts that follow the Kings”<sup>7</sup>. Here ‘absolution’ -*husāya-* is a regular sacramental word. ‘Medicine of Life’ - *sam hayyē-* is a term commonly applied to the Eucharist.

According to Ephrem all the O. T. types and mysteries are actualized and have become reality by the birth of the new Israel i.e., the Church. While commenting on *Diatessaron* he says: "As long as the Church in concealment, types told of her, while she herself remained silent but when the Church herself made manifest, she began to interpret the types, her (former) interpreters, which through this revelation of her became silent".<sup>8</sup> For the matter of Eucharist all types and symbols of the O. T. are realised in Christ at the last supper, when in the *Hymns on Crucifixion* he addresses the Cenacle:

"Blessed art thou, O Place! for in thee the scales  
of truth were set up for the two sides.  
There were two Passovers and two lambs,  
two nations and two deliverances.

3. Armanian hymns 48, 13–24; Translated by R. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

4. Noah's Ark as type of the Church is a well favourite Patristic theme.

5. *Hymns on Nativity* 1, 45 (Henceforth quoted as *HN*); Cf. J. B. Morris. *Selected works of St. Ephrem* London, 1987, p. 5.

6. Cf. R. Murray, *op. cit.* p. 252.

7. *Sermons II*, 43, 7-8; Cf. R. Murray, *op. cit.* p. 48.

8. *Commentary on Gospel Concordance* (Henceforth quoted as CGC) 1, 1.

The nation was like its Passover; a lamb for a time;  
and like its time departed and failed.

The deliverance of the Nations<sup>9</sup> is as unfading reality  
for this is the Lamb that will not pass away".<sup>10</sup>

In this hymn Ephrem points out two passovers, two lambs, two nations, and two deliverances or redemptions. The first Passover and the Paschal lamb played their roles in the deliverance of the Nation ie., the Israelites from Egypt. That was a type and a symbol of the true passover which has been realised in the Eucharist of the 'Nations' ie., the Church. The redemptive fruits of the first Paschal lamb departed and failed, whereas the salvific effects of the second Lamb is permanent and real to the Nations.

We find that Ephrem praises the 'upper room'<sup>11</sup> where the Last Supper was celebrated. Because according to him it is the first Church where the first sacrifice was offered by Christ. It is the first-born of all Altars.

"Blessed art thou, O Place! for never was set  
even among kings, a table like thine  
Not even the tent of the Holy of Holies,  
Wherein the Shewbread was set out.  
In thee for the first time was broken  
that Bread, for thou becomest his Church;  
the first-born<sup>12</sup> of altars, first by his offering  
In thee was seen before (all)".<sup>13</sup>

Though the Church was inaugurated with the descent of the Holy Spirit, here in the Last Supper Christ instituted the Church with the breaking of the true Unleavened Bread. Thus the Cenacle, the 'Upper room' became the first Church and the first of all altars.

#### **Church and Eucharist: Mysteries from the side of Christ**

A good example of the way in which St. Ephrem employs typology in the course of his meditation on Scripture is provided by his treatment of the verse in St. John's Gospel, 'one of the soldiers pierced the side of Jesus with a lance and from it there immediately came forth blood and water'.<sup>14</sup> In his *Commentary on Dialessaron* he explains: "Through the side I pierced with the sword; I entered the garden fenced in with the sword. Let us enter into that side which was pierced, since we were stripped naked by the counsel of the rib that was extracted. The fire that burnt in Adam, burnt him that rib of

9. The 'Nation' and 'The Nations' are used by early Church-Fathers. 'The Nation' indicates the chosen people of God ie., the Israelites, and 'The Nations' refers to the new people of God ie., the Church.

10. *Hymns on crucifixion* (Henceforth quoted as *HC*) No. 3, 3: R. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

11. Lk. 22:12

12. 'First born' – *bûkara* – has a particular Eucharistic sense.

13. *HC* 3,12.

14. Jon. 19:34.

his. For this reason the side of the Second Adam has been pierced, and from it comes forth a stream of water to quench the fire of the first Adam.....".

And a little further he continues: "There comes forth blood and water, which is his Church, and it is built on him; like Adam, for his wife was taken from his side. The rib of Adam was his wife, and blood of Our Lord, his Church.<sup>15</sup> From the rib of Adam death, and from the rib of Our Lord, life".<sup>16</sup>

The verse offers three main typological exegesis – the side, the piercing with the lance, the blood and water that issued forth. The first two of these provide links with the past, while the last points forward to the future in the vast panorama of salvation history. The side of Christ looks back to Adam's side, his rib from which Eve was miraculously fashioned<sup>17</sup>, the lance likewise looks back to the Cherub's revolving sword which excludes fallen mankind from paradise<sup>18</sup>, the blood and water, on the other hand pre-figured the Church and the Sacraments; viz., Baptism and the Eucharist.<sup>19</sup> Here we find paradoxically the Church, represented by sacraments, which are the means of sanctification of the Church itself. In other words Christ is the source of sanctification of the whole Church by means of the sacraments.

In connection with this theme Ephrem points out that Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit brought the sentence of death, while Christ gives us the Eucharist, to eat the pledge of resurrection. Christ's body is compared with the fruit, and so we may see the Church implicitly presented as anti-type of the garden: "It was said to Adam 'on the day that thou eatest thou shalt die', and (yet) on the day that he ate he did not die, but received the sentence (pledge) of death by being stripped of glory and going forth from paradise, and every day he meditated upon death. In contrast we eat the life that is in Christ, his body in place of the fruits of the tree. And we have his altar in place of the garden of Eden, and the curse has been washed away by his innocent blood...".<sup>20</sup>

#### Christ's 'Sacramental body' to His 'Mystical body'

'Christ put on the body'.<sup>21</sup> In Incarnation Christ received a human body and that same body has been given in the form of sacramental body viz., the Eucharist, as a lifegiving source to his Mystical body ie., His Church. Thus St. Ephrem provides material for us to find an implicit argument which would be summed up by saying that the whole dispensation of salvation has

- 
- 15. Here this provides the pattern: Adam's side: Eve :: Christ's side: Church St. Ephrem also typologically likens the miraculous birth of Eve from Adam's side with Mary's miraculous birth of Christ; here the pattern is: Adam: Eve :: Mary: Christ. *HN* no. 1,14–15; S. Brock, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
  - 16. *Commentary on Diatessaron* (Henceforth quoted as *CD*) XXI, 10. Quoted by S Brock, 'Mysteries from the side of Christ' in *Sobornost* 6 (1978) p. 462.
  - 17. Gen. 2:21.
  - 18. Gen. 3:24.
  - 19. S. Brock, *op. cit.*, p. 462.
  - 20. CGC 21,25; Cf. R. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
  - 21. This simple image of clothing is the Syriac Fathers' favourite way of describing the Incarnation.

its source in the human body of Christ; that same body in which he healed men and rose again, he gave us in sacramental form (in 'mystery') to heal us, to incorporate us in him in the Church.

By assuming a human body in Incarnation Christ has assumed solidarity with the human race. This idea is expressed in Ephrem's *second spiritual exegesis of the parable of the leaven*: 'Again, the leaven in the mass (is) his body in the mass of the family of Adam'<sup>22</sup>. Further, on 2 Cor. 4:7 he says: 'that is, these gifts have been given to us by means of Christ's body'. In Eph. 1:22-23 Ephrem sees Christ's physical body as the beginning of the Church, which is realised in his mystical body; 'just as he clothed himself in our body here, so finally the Church becomes the body of his body'<sup>23</sup>.

Ephrem often speaks of Christ's body as a garment he put on, and also as a source of salvation of man. This leads to the Eucharistic sense of Christ's body in the *Hymn on Faith* no. 17:

"Thy garment, Lord, is a fountain of healing  
in thy visible dress dwells thy hidden power  
A little spittle from thy mouth  
was a mighty wonder, for light was in the clay it made"<sup>24</sup>.

'Light here can allude to the gift of sight, which Christ restored by means of spittle in John 9:6. The miracles worked by Christ through his physical body are taken as types of the sacramental order.'

God's concern for the body, shown in Incarnation and now continued for us in the sacraments, is the theme of two whole series of hymns—*Hymns against Heresies* 42-7 and *Nysibian Hymns* 43-9. In Nysibian hymns 46, 2 Ephrem extends his vision to the sacraments as the pledge of our resurrection:

"If then Our Lord's concern convinces us  
that he has healed man wholly in every way  
baptising him in the Holy Spirit,  
nourishing him with the Medicine of Life,  
..... that the whole image of man  
will be restored in the Resurrection".

It is above all the Eucharist which makes present Christ's personal body, symbolizes his mystical body and gives us a pledge of our resurrection. All this is expressed in the complex imagery of *Nisibian hymns* 46:11:

"His bread beyond dispute,  
bears witness to our resurrection,  
for he blesses the food,  
how much more those who eat!  
In the twelve loaves  
Which he blessed and multiplied his Twelve.

22. CGC 11, 21.

23. Cf. R. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

24. HF. 10, 7.

And he took bread and broke it;  
 another, only one (loaf)  
 the symbol of the body,  
 the only-begotten, (born) of Mary”<sup>25</sup>.

The twelve loaves are presumably the five at the feeding of the five thousand and the seven at the four thousand. These twelve loaves are made a symbol of the apostles, while their multiplication is a figure of the growth of the Church, from the tiny apostolic band. Ephrem then passes to the blessing of bread at the Last Supper, whereby Christ made bread the ‘mystery’-razā- which symbolizes and makes present his body, the body born of Mary. That body was raised from the dead, and by eating the sacramental body we too receive the pledge of our resurrection.

Ephrem links the Eucharist with the Church through our physical assimilation of the Eucharist:

“In a new way his body  
 has been fused with our bodies  
 and his pure blood  
 has been poured into our veins.  
 His voice, too, is in (our) ears  
 and his splendour in (our) eyes.  
 The whole of him with the whole of us  
 is fused by his mercy.  
 And because he loved the Church greatly,  
 he did not give her the manna of her rival,  
 for her to eat him”.

He continues in the same hymn:

“Wheat, Olive, and grape  
 that were created for our use,  
 these three in three ways  
 serve thee in symbol.  
 With three medicines  
 thou hast cured our sickness;  
 humanity was weak,  
 suffering and failing;  
 thou hast strengthened it  
 with thy blessed Bread,  
 thou hast consoled it  
 With thy sober Wine,  
 and thou hast given it joy  
 with thy holy anointing”<sup>26</sup>.

Here we have a vivid picture of what happens to us in the Eucharistic meal in the Church. The Eucharist thus becomes a permanent and active presence of Christ. In other words, Christ has given the ‘Bread of Life’ to his Mystical body as a continued source of sacramental grace. ‘Because He loved the Church greatly’.

25. Quoted by R. Murray, *op cit.*, p. 76. Here ‘Only one’ applied to the Eucharistic bread; Cf. *ibid.*, foot note no. 3.

26. *Hymns on Virginity* 37, 2-3; Cf. R. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

### Eucharist and the 'Pilgrim Church'

We turn now, to examine the ways in which St. Ephrem links the Eucharist with the eschatological vocation of the Church. The phrase 'pilgrim Church' has been adopted and made popular, by the second Vatican Council, but it is no less appropriate to the conviction of the early Syriac Christianity that 'here we have no abiding city'. This pilgrimage of the human race through time is depicted by St. Ephrem as *The Way*. There are milestones on this way; they are prophets, the sacraments and the scriptures.

This *way* he divides into stages, and describes variously:

"For the sake of the fruit he laid the way  
which (runs) from the Tree right to the Cross;  
it extends from the wood to the wood  
and from Eden to Zion,  
from Zion to Holy Church  
and from the Church to the Kingdom."<sup>27</sup>

The first stage is from Eden to Moses, the second from Moses to Christ and the third is the age of the Church. And the Church in her turn, moving towards the Kingdom. The first two stages were times of types or symbols, through which alone 'life' (that is grace or salvation) was available. In the third stage i.e., in the age of the Church 'life' is given through the sacraments, especially by the Eucharist.<sup>28</sup>

Before the first stage man was imprisoned preferring to sit in darkness, then he set out on his quest for the abiding city. The first stage is the period of the uncircumcised, who were saved only through mysteries (types, symbols) of Our Lord; that is, they were saved by the obscure faith with which they reposed their trust in the coming Saviour, while the events of their lives prefigured his grace. The second stage is the period of the circumcised. It is the 'way of types' laid down by Moses in the Law, looking to fulfilment in the 'way of the Son', that is, in the third stage.

Now we are on the Royal way which is the period of the Church. Now the milestones are the sacraments:

"The sign of anointing and of baptism  
the breaking of bread and the cup of salvation  
and the scriptures.....

Blessed be the king, for the milestones of his way  
are mountains that cannot hide"<sup>29</sup>.

Heavenly kingdom is the last stage of the Way. Here all are led to the heavenly kingdom, towards the king and his gifts, to see the glory of the Father<sup>30</sup>. This heavenly kingdom or paradise is the type, as well as the eschatological goal of the Church. Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, the milestone of the present way which gives 'life' to the Church also enable her

27. *Hymns against Heresies* (henceforth quoted as *HH*) 26, 4. Cf. the quoted hymn and its elaboration in R. Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-249.

28. *HH* 26, 5. 29. *HH* 26,3. 30. *HH* 25,2.

to fulfill this eschatological goal of the Church. In other words, the Eucharistic bread is given to us as a means to enter into the kingdom or paradise. St. Ephrem brings this very concept into *Hymns on the Unleavened Bread* no. 17:

“the worldly ate the heavenly manna<sup>31</sup>  
they became dust through their sins<sup>32</sup>  
the spiritual bread took, took away and flow;  
the peoples flew up and lighted in Paradise  
every man became through the spiritual bread  
an eagle which can reach paradise.  
He who has eaten the living bread of the Son  
will fly towards Him on the clouds”.<sup>33</sup>

Thus the spiritual bread of Eucharist makes the members of the Church like an eagle and enables them to fly over the clouds and reach the paradise.

Coming back to the theme of mysteries from the side of Christ, we find that Christ has given his body as a pledge of our resurrection and future life, whereas Adam caused death by eating the fruit of Eden. “And we have his altar in place of the garden of Eden, and the curse has been washed away by his innocent blood, and by hope in resurrection we await future life, because these (ie., Christ’s body and altar) have become a pledge of it for us”.<sup>34</sup>

In short, the Church which is a type of the eschatological paradise, longs for it, as the promised land, where she expects a fully realised eschatological banquet, which has all the Eucharistic features.

### Conclusion

For Ephrem the Eucharist and the Church are the fulfilment of the signs and symbols prefigured in the O. T. At the Last Supper in the ‘Upper room’ the old and the new Paschal lambs meet and Christ, the True Paschal lamb breaks His body and distributes it to His Church. Thus it makes the ‘Upper room’ the first Church and the first Altar. Further, the Eucharist and the Church are mysteries from the side of Christ, where the former became the means of sanctification of the latter. The human body of Christ which he received in Incarnation has been given to His Mystical body in a sacramental form. The Eucharist, ‘the Bread of life’ assures us of an active and continued presence of Christ in the Church. Though all the O. T. types and symbols of the Eucharist are realised in the Church, its full realisation will be only in the heavenly Church. Hence the Church is now on a pilgrimage and the Eucharistic Bread sustains her in this voyage towards the Paradise. It prepares the Church for the glorious coming of the Lord, when the true Pasch will be fully realised in Heaven, now anticipated only in mystery.

Sylvester Kanjiramukalil, O.I.C., M.Th.

31. Ex. 16:1-35; Ps. 78:25; 105:40.

32. Num. 14:29; Jn. 6:49; 1 Cor. 10:3; Heb. 3:17.

33. R. Murray, ‘A Hymn of St. Ephrem to Christ, on the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit, and the sacraments, in *Eastern Churches Review* 3 (1970) p. 44.

34. CGC 21,25.

# Chavara's Vision of a Christian Family

## According to his Epistle to the Community at Kainakary

Blessed Kuriakose Chavara (1805–1871)<sup>1</sup> co founder of the congregation of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate for men and the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel for women, has left us some sixty seven letters<sup>2</sup> of which the first letter<sup>3</sup> or (better named) epistle to his parishioners at Kainakary is an important exposition of his vision of an ideal christian family given in practical instructions. This epistle was written in February 1868, three years before his death which occurred on third January 1971. In his introduction to the epistle Chavara writes: "... praying God's light and peace I write this family order or rule. I request you to accept it as an instruction coming from our fore-fathers and follow it carefully and make others too follow it". In an appendix he notes again that it was because he was impelled by a sense of justice and love to his 'kinsmen by flesh' that he wrote the epistle which "is to be my Testament for you" and which is to be "a paper that will not perish". Here the author makes reference to his death though not as imminent and describes the

epistle as a 'testament'. This reminds us of the farewell addressees of some biblical personalities like Moses (*Dt 33*), David (*2 Sam 23*), Paul (*Acts 20*) and even of Jesus (*Jn 13–16*)<sup>4</sup>, which took the form of an out-pouring of their hearts to those addressed. Chavara entrusts his 'testament' to his children in the community at Kainakary to be read on every first saturday of the month<sup>5</sup>.

### The Structure of the Epistle

Chavara's first epistle to the community at Kainakary has an introduction and a main body with two parts which we may call chapters for the sake of convenience<sup>6</sup>. There is no proper conclusion but there is an appendix which serves the purpose. The first chapter exposes his rule of christian family life and the second chapter his suggestions for a proper christian education of children.

The introduction is a brief description of the christian family and the appendix makes some touching personal remarks on his relationship to the addressees as is seen in some

1. Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara was declared blessed by Pope John Paul II at Kottayam, India on 8th February 1986.
2. *CHAVARAYACHENTE KATHUKAL*, Lukas Vithuvattickal (ed.), Ernakulam, 1982.
3. Chavara wrote a second epistle to the Christians in Kainakary in December 1869.
4. In the Bible the 'farewells' are reported as spoken, in Chavara they are written. He wrote a 'farewell also for his brethren in August 1870.
5. This request is made for sundays and first days of the month elsewhere (ch 1,24).
6. Hence our references to the First Epistle to Kainakary will be : 1Kainakary ch 1 verse 20 = 1 Kai 1,20.

of the pauline letters (*Gal* 6, 11ff., *Phil* 4). It does not contain a direct address to anyone and the proper addressees, the community of Kainakary are mentioned only in the appendix.

The main body of the epistle is in the form of exhortations comparable to those in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. Most of the twenty-four exhortations in the first chapter are illustrated by a fable, historical episode or a biblical event or word. Some have more illustrations. It is to be noted that the second chapter, with its sixteen instructions, has an illustration only in the final one.

As the epistle is only a century old and as the original is well preserved, there are no textual and critical problems and the language in general is elegant and intelligible. The logical sequence of ideas may not be always apparent as is the case with wisdom literature of olden times.

#### **The General Theme of the Epistle**

Christian family is the focus of this very important epistle of Chavara. The family in which the new citizens are born and brought up is seen by the Second Vatican Council as "the domestic church" in which the parents are the first teachers of the christian faith through their word and example (Church 1, 11). This seems to have been also the conviction of Chavara who knew the all-important and decisive role of the family in the formation of a healthy human society.

Chavara looks at the christian family in itself in the first chapter of his epistle with the eyes of a pastor who is more practical than theoretical. Hence he does not try to develop a systematic and logical theology

of the family. But his practical instructions help us to understand his vision of a christian family which is for him a community bound together in blood and love reflecting the heavenly bliss in this valley of tears. The eighteenth instruction in the first chapter gives us his vision of a christian family close to the biblical insights though he does not make any allusion to the Bible.

The second chapter addresses the parents directly and reminds them of their grave duty to educate their children properly<sup>7</sup>. Parents are the primary and principal educators of their children (Christian Education 3). This is the whole thrust of the second chapter.

#### **I The 'Rule' of the Christian Family**

Chavara's theology of the family is to be found in the practical guidelines he gives to his people as a relative and pastor. Here we shall try to synthesise the insights of the author so that we may have a coherent picture of his thinking.

1. For Chavara the supreme rule of the Christian family is, beyond doubt, mutual love and the consequent unity of mind and heart. In the introduction to the epistle he writes that the family is a koinonia formed by blood-relationship and love, where there is love and respect for the parents and peace between God and man. In this our world, full of sorrows, it is to be an abode of sweet consolation, peace and order. To live in a family without consideration for God and eternal life is miserable<sup>8</sup>. The author refers to the commandment of the Lord "that you love one another as I have loved you" (*Jn* 15.12),

7. 1 *Kai* 2,1

8. cfr. Introduction to the First Epistle to the Kainakarians.

confirming it again with another word of the Lord that a house divided against itself perishes (*Mt* 12,25). Mutual pardon brings peace on earth and eternal blessing in the world to come. The norm of justice in a christian family has to be greater than that of others. Chavara asks very pertinently whether we should add to the sufferings we have already inherited from our great father Adam<sup>9</sup>. In the same strain he writes: Tale-bearing is a dangerous business<sup>10</sup>. Taking family disputes to the law courts has never helped anybody<sup>11</sup>.

## 2. Domestic Servants

Domestic servants are to be people who fear God and their number is to be limited; their spiritual needs are to be taken care of<sup>12</sup>. To deny or delay their just wages is a sin that calls aloud for retribution from the Lord<sup>13</sup>.

## 3. Relationships and Good Neighbourliness

Relationships are to be established only with God-fearing and disciplined families; money or riches cannot be valid norms here<sup>14</sup>. One need not have many friends, but they are to be well chosen on the model of Jonathan and David. One who is not a friend of the Lord will not be a friend of man<sup>15</sup>. Receive into homes only people who fear God and are gentle; good or bad

company will tell upon the family<sup>16</sup>. Do not intervene in the affairs of others<sup>17</sup>; but the poor and the sick are to be visited on sundays and such other days<sup>18</sup>. Let no day pass off without an act of charity<sup>19</sup>.

## 4. Economic Affairs

One should not make a display of one's riches<sup>20</sup>; one should not make celebrations beyond one's normal means<sup>21</sup>. More important it is to produce the maximum out of the land one owns than to acquire more and more land<sup>22</sup>. Everybody has to work diligently in keeping with his state of life<sup>23</sup>. Commercial business may not be always economically profitable and may even be spiritually harmful. Hence it is to be practised only in case of necessity and with a real sense of justice. Only honestly acquired riches will remain in our hands<sup>24</sup>. One should not be too lavish or too stingy with one's riches; the wealth of the careless will pass off like smoke and that of the miser will be eaten away by the moth<sup>25</sup>. It is on a practical principle of peace that our author asks us not to borrow or lend money unless charity really demands it<sup>26</sup>. What one owes to another has to be returned carefully. What is stolen should not find a place at home<sup>27</sup>. The poor are not to be despised, their tears are powerful before the Lord<sup>28</sup>.

9. 1 *Kai* 1,1; *Mt* 5,46-47.

11. 1 *Kai* 1,2

13. 1 *Kai* 1,18; cfr *Jas* 5,4

15. 1 *Kai* 1,16

17. 1 *Kai* 1,7

19. 1 *Kai* 1,14

21. 1 *Kai* 1,6

23. 1 *Kai* 1,12

25. 1 *Kai* 1,15

27. 1 *Kai* 1,17

10. 1 *Kai* 1,10

12. 1 *Kai* 1,23

14. 1 *Kai* 1,8

16. 1 *Kai* 1,9

18. 1 *Kai* 1,22

20. 1 *Kai* 1,5

22. 1 *Kai* 1,11

24. 1 *Kai* 1,13

26. 1 *Kai* 1,4

28. 1 *Kai* 1,18

### 5. Sanctification of Sacred Times

Sacred days are to be spent in participation in the liturgical celebrations, reading good books and in visiting the poor and the sick<sup>29</sup>. Other celebrations are to be avoided on these days. Even when someone is dead in the family, only those whose services cannot be spared are to remain at home, as participation in the Divine Liturgy is so important<sup>30</sup>.

### 6. Some other Directions

1. In all kinds of sickness and suffering we have to offer ourselves to the will of God. Even a weak person can be content when everything goes well; one who has made God's will his own is strong and will find peace<sup>31</sup>.

2. The conversations in a christian family has to keep its own dignity<sup>32</sup>. Modesty is a virtue loved by God and man and so must determine the style of dress, postures and gestures of a person in a christian family<sup>33</sup>.

3. Pagan and heretical as well as obscene books should not find a place in the christian family. Doctrinal and spiritual books are to be there especially for children<sup>34</sup>. Sacred days are to be spent also in reading good books<sup>35</sup>.

4. The christian family must have a daily programme which should include fixed times for prayers, meditation, examination of conscience etc., The head of the family has to see to the regular observance of the programme<sup>36</sup>.

## II Christian Education of Children

The second chapter of Chavara's

first epistle to the Kainakarians contains instructions on the education of children. He describes children as treasure entrusted by Jesus to the parents to be returned to him on the last day. They are to be purified in his blood and made his servants. Their salvation or loss of salvation can seriously tell upon that of their parents. Hence they are to be carefully brought up in the 'fear' and love of the Lord. If they do not become good christians and if they do not fear and love the Lord, they will have no fear or respect for their parents and will not be of any help to them in their old age<sup>37</sup>. Being deeply conscious of the grave and mother to duty of the father bring up their children in a christian way, Chavara offers practical guidelines in the second chapter of his first epistle to the community at Kainakary.

### 1. Religious and civic education of children

When children are able to learn things, they are to be taught to pronounce the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph with due devotion; they are to be dedicated to the protection of the Holy Family. Slowly they are to be taught to say the prayers: *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* and *Glory be to as* also *The Angel of The Lord*. Chavara writes that children are to be nourished spiritually as they are nourished physically<sup>38</sup>. Here we may remember what the author has written about his own experience as a baby: "Through believing parents you made me a believer ... through the love you gave her, she mixed milk with prayers... sitting at her feet I slowly came to

29. 1 Kai 1,22

31. 1 Kai 1,20

33. 1 Kai 1,19

35. 1 Kai 1,22

37. 2 Kai 1,1

30. 1 Kai 1,3

32. 1 Kai 1,10

34. 1 Kai 1,21

36. 1 Kai 1,24

38. 1 Kai 1,21

the knowledge of God".<sup>39</sup> The whole family is to assemble for the evening prayers after which children are to kiss the hands of their parents in love and respect<sup>40</sup>. This good practice is continued in Kerala even now.

At the age of seven children are to be prepared for their first communion. They must also be trained in the devotion to the Blessed Mother<sup>41</sup>.

At the age at which one learns to discriminate things, children are to be sent to schools and parents have to enquire about their progress regularly<sup>42</sup>. It is to be seen that children do not learn telling lies or practising deceitful tricks; they are to learn honesty, justice and love<sup>43</sup>.

Children will have to be corrected, but parents are not to be too rigid or too light in the matter. Pampering will make them proud, severity will rob them of confidence and hinder mental growth. Bad words will only spoil them<sup>44</sup>. The mother should inculcate in children love and respect for the father and the father should do it in turn for the mother<sup>45</sup>.

Out of respect for the parents, children are to have separate rooms<sup>46</sup>. Even at home, babies are to be well dressed<sup>47</sup>. To draw out a quarrel among parents out of the petty quarrels of children is childish (Pillapada)<sup>48</sup>.

## 2. Attention to a chaste life

The conversations at home are to be pure and chaste especially when

children are around<sup>49</sup>. Children are not to be left to play away from the eyes of their parents. One should also be attentive to the servants who take care of them<sup>50</sup>. Even sending children to the relatives' homes is dangerous<sup>51</sup>.

After the age of twelve sons and daughters are not to be sent to the public celebrations, they are to learn a trade proper to them at home. This is especially true in the case of girls<sup>52</sup>. A girl's beauty is in her modesty, devotion, reticence and control of the eyes than in attractive make-up<sup>53</sup>.

## 3. Choice of state of life and economic affairs

Children are to be completely free in the matter of choosing their life; it is God's will and their choice. They are to be encouraged to make the choice at the proper age without delay. In the selection of life-partners, not money or riches, but nobility and good conduct are to be the norms<sup>54</sup>.

Chavara instructs parents not to leave their property too early to their children,<sup>55</sup> but he is careful to tell them that it has to be done before it is too late so that there may not arise quarrels among children after the death of their parents<sup>56</sup>.

## 4. A Final word to children

Chavara addresses the last instruction to children in the second person plural and invites them to honour

39. 1 Kai 2,2

40. *Atmanuthapam* (1, 43-60) an autobiographical poem of Chavara written in 1869.

41. 1 Kai 2,10

42. 1 Kai 2,8

43. 1 Kai 2,6

44. 1 Kai 2,10

45. 1 Kai 2,9

46. 1 Kai 2,9

47. 1 Kai 2,4

48. 1 Kai 2,13

49. 1 Kai 2,3 the example given here that in christian countries the parents tell their children that babies are dropped from the sky etc., seems simplistic.

50. 1 Kai 2,5

51. 1 Kai 2,7

52. 1 Kai 2,10; here we may find the sentiments of *Sirach* 42,9-10.

53. 1 Kai 2,12

54. 1 Kai 2,14

55. 1 Kai 2,15

56. 1 Kai 2,16

their father and mother so that they may have a happy life here on earth as also in the world to come. Here the author narrates a touching Japanese story in which one of the three sons of a poor mother, seeing no other means to keep her from starving pretended to be a thief in order to be taken to the authorities so that they may get some money for their mother. But the unnatural behaviour of the brothers brought out the truth and their love for the mother won them pardon and favours from the king<sup>57</sup>.

### III Toward a Theology of the Christian Family

Chavara describes the christian family as a reflection of heaven on earth, but he does not mention the community of one God in three persons or the holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph of which it could be a reflection. For him the family is a community of persons bound together in blood and love; it is a place where one should find a foretaste of heavenly love and joy in this world of suffering and misery.

'Fear of God' and 'devotion' are key concepts to a correct understanding of the christian family according to Chavara. In the eighteenth instruction in the first chapter of the epistle he writes: "The most important wealth of a family is fear of and devotion to God. A God-fearing family will enjoy the fruits of God's blessing in this world and in the world to come<sup>58</sup>. Here we are reminded of *Psalm 128* which is a short but very pregnant description of an ideal family in a few words. This wisdom *Psalm* begins with a blessing for those who fear the

Lord and the same is repeated in the fourth verse between which there is a brief description of a family. Chavara also speaks of the fear of God which brings blessings for the family. In the Bible the fear of the Lord / God is a term which could mean the filial fascination which arises from wonder, admiration, love, respect and devotion. It is in the salvific and liberating fear of God (Daivapheedi) and the unifying devotion (Bhakthi) that Chavara sees the foundation of a christian family which again could be pointing to its vertical - God-ward, and horizontal - man- ward, dimensions. Chavara speaks of peace with God and man; concern for the service of God and eternal life combined with respect for and obedience to parents. Fear of God is to be sought in one's relatives<sup>59</sup>, servants<sup>60</sup> and even visitors<sup>61</sup>. The *Ps.* does not explain things in so many words, but between verses of the blessings are enclosed the community of the mother, father and children who are to 'walk in the ways of the Lord'. Such a life is promised peace and the gift of many years on earth while in some other *Pss.*, there is no mention of a future blessing, Chavara speaks of the present and future blessings. For Chavara an ideal christian family is a community of persons bound together in blood and love established on the principles of fear of God and devotion.

A christian family should help its members to grow in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man (*Lk 2,52*). The most important and inescapable duty of the parents is the proper christian education of their children who are entrusted to them as a treasure to be given back to God<sup>62</sup>. According to the Second

57. 1 *Kai* 1,16

59. 1 *Kai* 1,8

61. 1 *Kai* 1,9

58. 1 *Kai* 1,18

60. 1 *Kai* 1,23

62. 1 *Kai* 2,1

Vatican Council the parents as transmitters of life have a grave duty to be the first educators of their children<sup>63</sup>. The very fact that Chavara has devoted a separate chapter in his epistle to this theme shows that he was fully aware of its importance.

For Chavara the christian upbringing of a child must start at a very early stage. First of all they have to be educated in the fear of God which really means love and devotion to God. Hence, in keeping with the Indian tradition he instructs that children be taught to practise the *Namajapas* repeating the names Jesus, Mary and Joseph<sup>64</sup>. Children are to be taught to love and respect their parents; they have to learn and practise the civic virtues. In choosing a state of life they are to be completely free.

#### IV Conclusions

Any spiritual author has to be studied and evaluated in the socio-cultural and spiritual context in which he lived and wrote. Only with this in mind we can read and relish Chavara's First Epistle to the people of Kainakary. His insight into the family as a reflection of heaven, an abode of mutual love, peace, and joy on earth, is based on the principle of the fear of God and devotion to man. With this principle in mind, he envisions a well-ordered and disciplined christian family.

With the passage of times and customs and the discovery of new dimensions of human life many things change or even disappear altogether. Some practical suggestions of Chavara also may be said to have lost their validity. He says that children, especially girls, are not to be sent out for public celebrations after the age of twelve<sup>65</sup>. But his suggestion that children are not to be corrected with severity or light-heartedness is sound psychology and practical wisdom. That one should avoid borrowing or lending money too is a very practical suggestion at least in the Indian context. He asks us not to be too generous or too stingy with our riches which brings to mind a parallel idea in the book of Proverbs though with a different accent : "Give me neither poverty nor riches... lest I be full and deny thee... or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God"<sup>66</sup>. His concern for the spiritual welfare of the workers must<sup>67</sup> have struck his contemporaries as a revolutionary idea.

What Chavara wrote a century ago to his beloved community in Kainakary now belongs to the patrimony of the universal church. Chavara's First Epistle to the community at Kainakary will remain a classic in Christian family spirituality.

George Kaniarakath, C. M. I.

63. *Christian Education* 3,11

64. 1 Kai 2,2

66. *Prov* 30,8-9

65. 1 Kai 2,10

67. 1 Kai 1,23

# The Indian Mind and Oriental Mysticism

## Part I: THE INDIAN MIND

In North India, one very often sees the children with their faces turned towards heaven as their kites soar higher and higher in the strong wind. In most of the villages life flows serene and peaceful like a still river in the plane. After the brief period of cultivation, after sowing and reaping, people spend their time sitting idle. Womenfolk remain within the house in leisurely talk and the elderly men squat outside under the shady trees, in silence. On the streets of the busy Indian cities and towns one finds sanyasis who are immersed in silence oblivious of what goes on around them. Among the intelligentia there are many who could talk for hours about the maya of the world and the sole reality of Brahman with which one's own inner reality is identical, while they move about and act like ordinary men and follow the prescriptions of the Hindu Religion. These things are indicative of the Indian mind, which took shape from the interaction of various races: the imaginative and credulous Austrics with their belief in "Mana" the divine essence permeating all things, the Dravidians with their belief in Father-god and Mother-goddess which later grew into the worship of Siva and Uma, Vishnu and Sri and who developed the ideas of Yoga, and Mysticism, the Aryans with their primitive attitude towards the unseen forces worshipping Mitra, Varuna and Indra connected with the phenomena of nature and finally the Mongoloids

with their worship of 'the Great Mother', from whom the tantric form of Hinduism arose.<sup>1</sup>

It is really difficult to put in words the nature of this Indian Mind which has its roots in the different sects and unorganized forms of Hinduism. The present attempt to understand the Indian Mind is restricted to the Scriptures of Hinduism - the Vedas, Brahmanas and the Upanishads which furnish the philosophical and theological foundation for the different forms of Hinduism.

### The Vedas

Important theological and philosophical contributions are made by the Rig veda, while the Sama and Yajur vedas do not make any new significant contribution. Magical and speculative elements are found in the Atharvaveda.

In the earlier books of the Rigveda (2-7) although many gods are worshipped there is a hidden tendency to consider one god as supreme above all. When the Rshis sang the praises of one god and worshipped him asking his favours, they gave him the attributes of the supreme being. Thus we find Varuna, Indra, Agni, Savitr, Soma and Rudra with the attributes of the supreme deity. We see in this peculiar attitude towards the Rigvedic gods the natural tendency of man towards belief in a supreme being.

The granting of supremacy to more than one god, relation between the various gods and the interconnection between the various phenomena

1. Cfr. The Cultural Heritage of India Vol. I, pp. 78-88.

of nature with which the gods were connected, obscured the distinction between the gods. The quest for unity, the perception of the sacred power manifested in the Many gods and the natural phenomena and above all the profound aspiration of the religious soul for a supreme deity induced some to see one reality behind the many gods. "They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni and he is heavenly nobly-winged Garutman. To what is but one, sages give many a title; they call him Agni, Yama and Matriśvan." (Rigveda – RV – I, 164, 46). "Him with fair wings though only one in nature, wise singers shape with songs in many figures" (RV. X, 114, 5).

This tendency to posit one supreme principle took two directions, the impersonal and the personal. Some saw the ultimate principle of all things in an impersonal reality such as the *Word* (Vāk, RV. X, 125), *Religious Austerity* (RV. X, 190). One seer called the primordial reality *That One* (tadikam RV. X, 129) which evolved into this world. In this reality which according to the seer is beyond being, beyond intelligence and will, like the *One* of Plotinus, only later do desire and mind arise. This thought has exercised a decisive influence on the teaching of the Upanishads and the subsequent advaitic thinking.

But these attempts for unity and intelligibility seem to be more philosophical than religious. The religious soul could not be satisfied with such speculations, it wants a personal supreme being to whom it can turn in prayer and worship. So we see a seeker proclaiming the god worthy of adoration. He is Hiranygarbha who originated before everything else and he is entitled to the worship of men, because he is the one Lord of all things who established heaven and earth by his activity, rules over all and is the one source of both men and gods (RV. X, 121). For another

poet the one god is Visvakarman (RV, X, 81 & 82) who made heaven and earth from some primordial matter and who is above all the gods and their source. But these gods also remained philosophical constructs or conceptions for the idea of one god did not gain ground amidst the worship of the many traditional gods who attracted the attention of the people.

Perhaps the one trend of thought that is typical of the Indian Mind is found in the Purushasūkta (the hymn to the Person, RV. X, 90). The primordial being called Purusha is identified with the world, and at the same time he transcends the world since the world is only part of him. The world originates from him in the form of a person whose sacrificial remnants become this world or this world rises from the dismembered parts of the person. There is a mixture of personal and impersonal elements, immanence and transcendence, a mixture of poetry and speculation; it is a ritualistic cosmogony, it is an expression of a mystical experience.

### Atharvaveda

The Atharvaveda, the veda of charms, pre-supposes the power of ritualistic words and charms to produce effects automatically. Here we find the peculiar method of the Indian seers in their confrontation with the problem of reality. When they propose a new theory, which is quite different from the earlier theories, there is no outright denial of the previous theories but the seers make use of them to explain their own without making much effort to harmonise the material they use.

There is a shifting of the supreme being from one thing to another. The attributes of the old supreme beings are predicated of the new ones as is the case with Prana (AV. 11, 4),

Kala (AV, 19, 53 & 54), Kama (AV, 9, 2) and Skambha (AV, 10, 7). The psychic principle in man is almost identified with the cosmic principle or the divine, in the hymn of Brahmarcharin (AV, 10, 5) and the hymn of the primal man (AV, 10, 2).

Religion and philosophy, myths and traditions, poetry and primitive science, mysticism and magic are intermingled in the hymns of the Atharvaveda whose "most salient teaching is sorcery" the power of which is "used to appease, to bless and to curse as the orthodox view would put it.<sup>2</sup>

### The Brahmanas

Though the Brahmanas, which are the commentaries on the vedas, explained everything in the beginning in terms of the activity of the creator-god Prajapati, he remained a theoretical god (He could be traced to the cosmological speculations of the Rigveda) and finally became subject to Brahman who in turn created Prajapati (Sathapatha Brahmana - SB - 3, 7, 1, 1). This Brahman is the personification of the power behind the sacrifice and the religious rituals, the mysterious reality pervading the gods and the worlds. The conception and cult of this God was the result of the glorification of the rituals and sacrifice by the Brahmins.

At the same time Atman as the ground of reality was developing during the period of the Brahmanas. It was latent in the Rigveda, in the comparison between man and the universe, the purusha pervading the universe (RV. X, 90), Visvakarman entering into the created realities (RV. X, 81). The comparison between man and the universe develops in the fire-altar-ceremony of Sathapatha

Brahmana (Book X). The fundamental reality of man is breath (*prāna*) and that of the universe is wind (*vāyu*) and this seems to be the highest knowledge about reality conceived under the images of 'Agni' or 'Purusha' (SB, 10, 3, 3). In Sathapatha Brahmana 10, 5, 2 the god - man in the sun is identified with the man in the right eye in the context of the fire-altar-ceremony, the greatest sacrificial ritual in the Brahmanas. These things indicate that as there is a psychic inner reality for man there is an inner reality for the universe and these two are the same. From this the next step could easily be taken: Atman and Brahman are identical and the individual Atman is the same as Brahman. The self of man is the way for discovering Atman who is identical with Brahman.<sup>3</sup>

Thus towards the end of the Brahmanas Brahman and Atman became the absolutes. There was no clear idea about either of these two beings. They were sometimes called Purusha or Prāna. The upanishads make it their primary concern to know this mysterious reality, the supreme cause, the source of power and realization.

### The Earlier Upanishads

The tendency for identification of different things because of some objective or putative relation or similarity and the tendency for identification of knowledge with the object known reach their climax in the upanishads. The chief message of the earlier upanishads is that the individual self is identical with Atman the supreme being. There is only a temporary difference between the world and the supreme being. After death and destruction the souls and

2. Cf. Sacred Books of the East Vol. 42, Intro. 62ff.

3. Keith, A. B., The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads P. 449; SB. 10, 6, 3.

things merge in the supreme. Differences will disappear and unity and oneness alone will remain. It is like the waters of different rivers reaching the ocean (Chandokya Upanishad 6,4). Everything turns back to the source and intelligence remains alone without any objects since they have become intelligence (Brahadaranyaka upanishad 2, 4, 12-14). Atman and Ego are identified with the totality of things (Chandokya upanishad 7, 25). The objects merge into the senses, the senses return to intelligence and intelligence remains alone (Kaushitaki Upanishad 4). This is, so to say, the culmination of the impersonal trend of thought and the quest for unity, a kind of mysticism devoid of religious warmth and freedom.

There is another teaching in the earlier upanishads which makes some distinction between Atman and the world; Atman and man. Atman is the unknown hidden principle behind the activities of gods and men and the forces of nature and at the same time he remains distinct from them. His activity is transcendent so that men and gods cannot know him acting through them. (Brahadaranyaka upanishad – BAU – 3,7). This reality residing in the innermost part of man, the Lord and Ruler of all things, (BAU. 4,4,22) is the goal of all man's quests and pursuits and the end of all his religious and secular activities and the source of the highest bliss whom one sees in oneself when one has mastered all one's senses and passions by asceticism. Reaching this state one becomes immortal and free attaining bliss and peace. One sees everything as Atman (BAU. 4, 4, 23).

#### Later Upanishads

As we saw the main trend of thought in the earlier upanishads is impersonal an advaidic, but a distinctively new trend of thought em-

erges in the later upanishads, esp. in Katha, Isa, Mundaka and Svetasvatara. They try to transcend the impersonal Brahman-Atman of the earlier upanishads by affirming a Lord or Person beyond Brahman and Atman, and subjecting them to him or sometimes attributing personal activities to Atman and Brahman and distinguishing the soul from them.

By contemplating Atman who is in the heart of man as god (deva) one becomes free from misery (Katha U. 2,12). One who is without active will beholds Atman's greatness and becomes free from sorrow (Katha U. 2,23). Isa upanishad speaks of a Lord who pervades the world (1). While it condemns those who seek liberation through ritualistic actions it has more severe words for those who delight in Atman-knowledge<sup>9</sup>. For, according to Isa, the supreme is different from the universe (the becoming) and from Atman (non-becoming, 12-14).

To Mundaka Upanishad, though Brahman is attained through the means of Atman, he is not the supreme being but a being subject to the divine person (Mundaka 2,1,2). This divine person is the source of men and gods and all other beings (Mundaka 2,1,3-9). When the individual soul who is immersed in grief and misery sees the divine person, he is freed from sorrow (Mundaka 3,1, 1-3). Svetasvatara sees the supreme being as the personal good Rudra-Siva (1,8-10; 3,2-5). The knowledge of the Lord residing in the heart liberates the individual soul from his fetters (4, 11-20).

For these later upanishads, the supreme being who is in the heart of man is personal. In the older upanishads man attained liberation from his limitations and misery through becoming Brahman or Atman but in later upanishads it was through the

Atman who was considered to be a purusha or through the lord who was beyond Atman and Brahman that the individual soul attained complete liberation. In the older upanishad there is the communion with the all, becoming the all or becoming Brahman which constitutes liberation. In the later upanishads there is the vision of the supreme being or the lord residing in one's heart reaching the supra-spatio-temporal state or brahma-state, having communion with the all. Even in the upanishads where we find these personal trends of thought there are many passages affirming the identity of the individual Atman with the absolute. Knowledge of the supreme is becoming the supreme, being one with the all, being their Atman or source. There is no radical distinction of the supreme being from the finite or the dependent existence of the creatures which are distinct from the supreme through created existence. The locus of these speculations is the concrete world and the concrete man, who is sometimes experienced in his spiritual state without attachment to the body, sometimes with separation and attachment to the body. When man is experienced exclusively in his spiritual state it leads to advatic experience and when he is experienced in his dependence on the body it leads to personal experience of the supreme.

## Part II: ORIENTAL CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

As E. G. Browne, the great orientalist, testifies, mysticism represents a spiritual tendency which is universal, a tendency of the human soul which

is eternal: "There is hardly any soil, be it ever so barren, where mysticism will not strike root; hardly any creed, however formal, round which it will not twine itself. It is, indeed, the eternal cry of the human soul for rest; the insatiable longing of a being wherein infinite ideals are fettered and cramped by miserable actuality; and so long as man is less than an angel and more than a beast; this cry will not for a moment fail to make itself heard. Wonderfully uniform, too, whether it came from the Brahmin sage, the persian poet, or the christian quietist, it is in essence an enunciation more or less clear, more or less eloquent, of the aspiration of the soul to cease altogether from self and to be at one with God".<sup>4</sup>

Etymologically the word 'mysticism' comes from the Greek word 'mysterion', which means mystery. Historically it is connected with the mystery-cult of the Greeks. It is from this cultic context that we have the idea of 'mystic' and 'mysticism'.<sup>5</sup> The 'mystic' was one who had been initiated into the secret knowledge of the divine things and who was under obligation to keep silence concerning the knowledge imparted to him. The term 'mystical' came to be applied to any esoteric doctrine which was revealed only to the initiated. Hence 'mysticism' is originally the knowledge and experience of the divinity by the initiated. Since 5th century B. C., it has meant the highest spiritual experience possible for man in this life. This experience is derived from the intuitive awareness of God and of the soul's union with him. According to Dionysius the Aerophagite of the 5th century A. D., the mystic is a

- 
4. E. G. Brown, *A Year Among the Persians*. London, 1950, p. 136.
  5. The word 'mystikos' comes from the verb "myo" which means 'to close', 'to close the eyes', and derivatively 'to keep a secret'. Ta mystika" are the ceremonies of the mysteries and "oi mystikoi" are the initiated ones who are supposed to keep ritual secrets.

man who is united with God in divine contemplation.

But in history, Mysticism has wider meaning: (i) it represents a spiritual tendency which is universal, found in all religious faith. (ii) It represents a religious consciousness based on a realisation of the Beyond, Unity, Beauty, God. It is the immediate feeling of the unity of self with God; it is the religious life at its very heart and centre, wherein God ceases to be an object and becomes an experience, and wherein the self and the World are alike forgotten, the subject knows itself to be in full possession of the highest and fullest truth. (iii) It is described as a religious experience in which the feeling of God is at its maximum of intensity. Experience bespeaks an awareness caused by presence, a contact with things inner or outer. Experience implies a passivity with a vital response. It is a received awareness of a presence, or the in-living of a object. Only God can originate this experience of God and no one else. And only through the effectes he produces, can we describe it. (iv) Mysticism therefore involves an intense and continuous awareness of the all-pervading presence of God. This awareness leads to a union with God and almost a merger in the consciousness of God. This union is the supernatural union of likeness, begotten of love, which is the union of human will with the divine. It seeks to realise the natural presence of God in creation by entering into a personal relationship with the concealed presence and by a penetration of the divine within the soul.<sup>6</sup> The mystic therefore claims that it is possible to have direct experience of and contact with God, an immediate apprehension of the Divine.<sup>7</sup>

(v) The following seems to be the other marks of a mystic experience:

1. The mystic seems lifted beyond the time-space continuum into a new realm of existence. Particularities recede in favour of unity.
2. There is a depth-sensation of feeling of interiority. In mysticism a person seems to be drawn towards the centre of his person. He meets God in his interiority.
3. The mystic experience brings about a unification, an integration of the person. We gather ourselves together and attain a simplicity and harmony.
4. The subject-object dualism recedes and almost disappears. The testimonies of many mystics like Abulafia, a Jewish mystic, Henry Suso and Meister Ekhart, Susuki on satori experience, Plotinus, Therasa of Avila etc., are unanimous on this point. The mahavakyas of Upanishads like 'Tat tvam asi = Thou art that; 'Ayam atma brahma' = I am Brahma; 'prajnanam Brahman' = Consciousness is Brahman etc., are nothing but expressions of this experience.

(vi) Besides, there are the following specific traits in christian mysticism:

1. The knowing element in christian mysticism is nonsensual, simple and spiritual. There are no images, no concepts, no bodily forms, in the progressively deepening knowledge of God.
2. The experience is given, poured in, and not produced by human effort and techniques. The Father, Son and the Spirit work on the soul.

6. Cf. "Nature and Meaning of Mysticism" By M. Smith in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. by Richard Woods, London, 1980, p. 20.  
 7. William James: *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. London, 1926.

3. The divine invasion in mystics is a gradual, progressive suspension of man's cognitive and affective powers. God gives Himself more and more deeply so that man becomes more receptive and less active.
4. In more profound experiences God can produce an indelibility and a certitude of the divine presence,
5. Christian mysticism is an interpersonal communion, not an impersonal awareness of a neuter reality.
6. This communion is progressive immersion in love, an intimate but non-pantheistic union with God.
7. This contemplation in its fully developed form becomes a continual experience.
8. Mystical experience produces moral goodness – detachment, strength in suffering, humility, faith, peace etc.

### **1. Mysticism in Eastern Christianity**

What do we mean by Oriental or Eastern Christianity or Church ?

Geographically, it means the Church in the eastern territories of the Roman empire. Culturally the Eastern Churches mean the Churches that developed in the cultural context of the East. Ecclesiastically, the Oriental Churches mean the Churches of apostolic origin other than Rome, such as the Churches of Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Selucia Ctesiphone or Babylone.

All these churches have their own special patrimony handed down by forefathers, such as sacred liturgy, theological system, mystical tradition,

ecclesiastical discipline, hierarchical orders and other elements of Christian life that depend on the history, genius and temperament of a people.<sup>8</sup> This special patrimony is what we call a Rite, or particular Church. Each particular Eastern Church has its own specific spiritual patrimony and mystical tradition together with certain salient common elements which are universally present in the traditions of all eastern churches. We now propose to look into these common elements of the mystical tradition only. The mysticism of the Orient is known by various names such as the mysticism of the Logos, of fire and light, of the experience of the spirit, trinitarian mysticism etc. We shall here deal only with the mysticism of the experience of the spirit.

### **2. Mysticism and Theology**

The Eastern tradition never makes such a sharp distinction between mysticism and theology or between the personal experience of the divine mysteries and the dogma affirmed by the church, as in the west. Theology in the west, is reflection on faith or bringing the word of God into expression. Theology is a definite system here, in which mystical theology has a special place. Mystical theology is different from dogmatic theology; where as in the East, theology and mysticism support and complete each other. One is impossible without the other. If mystical experience is a personal working out of the content of the common faith, theology is an expression of it, for the profit of all, to be experienced by others. So there is no christian mysticism without theology and there is no theology without mysticism either. One must live the dogma in such a way that it makes a profound change, an inner transformation of spirit, enabling him

---

8. Cfr. Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches; Documents of Vatican II, W. M. About, p. 374.

to experience it mystically. Mysticism is, therefore, the perfection and crown of all theology for the oriental Church.<sup>9</sup>

Both theology and mysticism have the common ultimate end, namely union with God or as the oriental Fathers put it, the theosis or divinization of man. "God made himself man, that man might become God" if the theological and spiritual principle enunciated and elaborated by St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Gregory Nazianus. And eastern theology wants to be faithful to this general approach of the Fathers, who were not only intellectuals and pastors, but also contemplatives and mystics. Any eastern theologian, therefore, true to his vocation, must also be a contemplative and mystic. Again, any eastern theologian, therefore, true to his vocation, must also be a master of spiritual life, so that theology is not separated from mysticism and pastoral responsibilities, but find new resources and developments out of the spiritual and mystical content of the actual lived faith.

### 3. Mysticism of the Experience of the Spirit

If the West has understood man as a rational animal the East conceives him as the 'image and likeness of God'. The west degraded man to the level of animal, the East raised him to the level of the Divine. The inner core of man is divine. The divine image is the nucleus of the human essence. By creation, man becomes an image of God, by baptism he becomes an adopted son of God and the abode of the Spirit. The whole process of divinisation is a progressive conscientisation-programme where one makes himself aware of his being the image of God. Mysticism is this increased awareness of

the presence of the spirit within and the clear vision of the image of God within oneself. All Christians are called to be aware of this fact and all must seek to possess God consciously within them. If one cannot realise this reality in a conscious way, he has no right to be called spiritual. Oriental mysticism begins here and grows gradually into an abiding awareness of the presence of the Spirit within and culminates in an intense experience of the spirit, which divinizes the personality of the experiencing subject. To show the process and nature of this mysticism, the oriental fathers and mystics have recourse to the Bible and their own personal experience.

The people of Israel were convinced that God was with them. This conviction was expressed by Ezekiel and other priestly writers: "I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for ever more. My dwelling-place shall be with them and I will be their God and they shall be my people." (Ez 37:26-27) "And I will make my abode among you and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God and you shall be my people." (Lev 26:11-12). "And I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God-who brought them out of the Land of Egypt that I might dwell among them." (Exod 29:45-46) In order to indicate God's presence among them and His transcendence the authors used the excellent aramaic term 'sekinah', derived from the verb 'sakan' = to inhabit. Following the same line of thought, the New Testament writers too express the idea of the indwelling of the spirit:

"And I will pray the Father and he will give you another pareclete to be with you for ever...; You

9. Cfr. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, London, 1973, p. 8 f.

know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."

Jn 14: 16-17

"If a man loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him."

(Jn 14,23)

"If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us his Spirit. (1 Jn 4:12-13)

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you". (1 Cor 3,16)

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you...you are not your own." (1 Cor 6,19)

From Jesus' own words and from those of St. Paul, it is abundantly clear that the spirit dwells in us. In conformity with scripture, therefore, the fathers and theologians of the eastern church developed the idea of the experience of the indwelling spirit. It is this that St. Seraphim of Sarov made clear when he was asked to define the object of christian life. He said: "Prayer, fasting, vigils and all other christian practices, although wholly good in themselves, certainly do not in themselves constitute the end of our christian life; they are but the indispensable means for the attainment of that end. For the true end of christian life is the acquiring of the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup> St. Simeon the New Theologian (+1022), one of the greatest christian mystics of the Orient, also believed that the end and goal of the incarnation was the communication of the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> For Simeon, the Holy Spirit is the

principle of all spiritual life. His mysticism is therefore entirely pneumatological. His title "The New Theologian" refers to his contribution of this new experience of God in the Holy Spirit.

Simeon wrote his hymns, especially catecheses, to stimulate his brethren to greater perfection by using his own mystical experiences as a model. These hymns remain one of the great masterpieces of christian mystical literature because of his lyrical, esctatic descriptions of his growth in mystical union with Jesus Christ and his spirit. Inspired and impelled by the Holy Spirit to share his rich experiences to others, Simeon published most of his works during his life time. Nicetas, his disciple, writes: "While he was still living, he was writing, even in spite of himself, night and day, the mysteries that the divine Spirit was confiding to his intelligence. The Spirit that was stirring and leaping within him was not allowing him any repose until he had put into writing His words and interior operations."<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. Baptism of the Spirit

Simeon teaches that the christian's first baptism truly confers grace and indwelling of the Spirit. Yet there is still a fuller possession of the spirit that comes through a deeper faith, through repentance for sins, through works of penitence, confession and tears. This second baptism confers a deeper conscious awareness of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, living within the Christians. Simeon exhorts the christians, therefore, to desire eagerly, to ask, to knock for this great gift: "For the moment, learn the teaching, do penance, sub-

10. Cf. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*....p. 196.

11. Cf. Catecheses VI, Transl: by J. Panameile, in *Sources Chretiennes*, 104. 45f.

12. Cf. George Maloney, *The Mystic of Fire and Light*, New Jersey, 1975, p. 53.

mit yourself, fast, weep, pray; thus by these practices and other similar ones, run, struggle, pursue, search, knock at the door, ask without ever turning your head away, until you have seized, taken and received, until the door has been opened to you and you enter in, until in the nuptial chamber you contemplate the spouse...<sup>13</sup> In a beautiful prayer Simeon entreats the Holy Spirit to come to him with full warmth and intensity so that he can experience him through this baptism of the spirit: "Come true light, come eternal life, come hidden mystery, come nameless treasure, ..... come endless happiness,... come resurrection of the dead; come powerful one who always makes, remakes and transforms everything by your unique power..... come, you whom my wretched soul has desired and still desires. Come, only one, to one who is alone; since you can see that I am alone; come, you who have separated me from everything and who have made me alone in this world, come, you who have yourself become desire in me and have made me long for you – you who are absolutely inaccessible. Come my breath and my life, come consolation of my soul; come my joy, my glory and my endless delight."<sup>14</sup>

This is a prayer of invocation, at the same time a prayer issuing out of deep experience of the spirit as the one who transformed Simeon into a new being full of joy and endless delight. Through seeking, finding and experiencing the spirit, the soul gradually becomes intensely aware of his presence, which brings it into a state of apathia or passionlessness.

This is a mystical state, which stills all the passions in man and re-integrates his whole being, sense, emotions, intellect and will. The entire person is rooted in the spirit in a peaceful tranquility that is both dynamic and delightful. St. Isaac the Syrian describes vividly this state of mystical experience in the following lines; "when the soul undergoes such spiritual activity and subjects itself completely to God and through direct union nears the divinity, and is enlightened in its movements by an interior light from above and the mind experiences a feeling of future happiness, then it forgets itself, its temporal existence on this earth and loses any attraction for things of this earth; there is enkindled in it an ineffable joy, an indescribable sweetness swarms the heart, the whole body feels its repercussions and man forgets not only his plaguing passions, but also even life itself and things that the Kingdom of Heaven consists of nothing other than this blissful condition. Here in this state he experiences that the love of God is sweeter than life and intelligence,..... is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb."<sup>15</sup>

In his "practical and theological precepts" St. Simeon describes this experience of the spirit as a state of ceaseless contemplation and enjoyment: "A man who becomes a participant of the Divine Spirit is freed from all passionate lusts (apathia) ... and having tasted immortal glory and sweetness and being conjoined with it, he is constantly urged to soar on high and be with God, not allowing himself even for a moment to retreat from contemplation and insatiable

- 
- 13. J. Darrouges, ed. *Traites Theologiques et Ethiques*, 5, 508-519, p. 116 as quoted in G. Maloney, op. cit., p. 67.
  - 14. J. Paramelie, *Sources Chretiennes*, 156, p. 151 f.
  - 15. Isaac the Syrian: *De Perfectione Religiosa*, ed. by P. Bedjan, Paris, 1909, Logos 31, I. 197.

enjoyment of Him.....".<sup>16</sup> Simeon also calls this last stage of union with the spirit as 'betrothal of the Holy Spirit', which is, according to him, almost inexplicable and incomprehensible: "The betrothal of the Holy Spirit is inexplicable even for those who have been granted it, for it is comprehended incomprehensibly, is constrained unconstrainedly, is seen invisibly; it animates, speaks in and moves him who has acquired it; it flies away from its secret abode, wherein it is sealed, and is unexpectedly found there again. This proves that when it comes, it is not permanently and for ever, and when it departs, it is not never to return. Therefore if a man who has acquired it, does not have it, it is as though he has it, and when he has it, it is as though he has it not."<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting to note here that all the characteristic notes of mysticism enumerated by William James were notably verified in this description of St. Simeon centuries ago. Betrothal of the spirit is inexplicable or ineffable; there is 'seeing' and 'comprehension' or a noetic quality in it; it flies away, and comes again, it is not permanently there or it is transient as James puts it; and finally the mystic cannot acquire it, or retain it by himself, he has it and he has not it, or there is a passivity in it, it is fully given from a Superior power.

We see a gradual growth in and an experience of the awareness of the Spirit within, in what we have described above. In baptism a christian is given the grace of indwelling spirit: But to grow in the way of christian perfection, he must receive a baptism of the spirit, through prayer, repen-

tance and confession. This baptism of the spirit makes him increasingly aware of the presence of the spirit and His workings. The spirit makes him more and more interior, prayerful, virtuous and a worthy dwelling place for itself. The spirit now grants him the grace of apathia or passionlessness; namely he is not tossed to and fro by his passions and desires; He experiences a stability in God; a sobriety of mind and heart; and a blissful hesychia which makes him calm and tranquil in God. He is now entering into the transforming union with the indwelling spirit, who divinises him progressively. This transformation, divinisation and the consequent mystical union is, according to St.Simeon, the Betrothal of the Spirit, which is the last stage of the spiritual attainment a soul can have in the life.

### Conclusion

As we have seen mysticism in general is the realization of the beyond, experiencing the life transcending time and space. It is a state of awareness where subject-object dualism is not seen or disappears altogether. Briefly, we can say it is an experience of unity where multiplicity disappears or becomes unimportant. Then it is the unity of the self with God, immediate awareness of the presence of God, entering into a personal relationship with the concealed presence of God and almost a merger with the consciousness of God. Another characteristic or mysticism is that man experiences God in his interiority.

In the Christian tradition, mystical experience is not produced by human effort but by the Triune God and man remains passive. And lastly it is

16. See. *Writing from the Philoklia*, transl. by G. E. H. Palmer, London, 1977,  
p. 120.

17. *Philokalia* p. 118.

interpersonal communion and non-pantheistic union with God.

When we examined oriental mysticism, we found that mysticism is personalizing or living the content of the common faith and that theology is its expression. Mysticism is not for a few chosen people but every Christian is called to experience it. In short, it is the perfection of Christian existence. Man who received the image of God at creation becomes the adopted son of God and the abode of the H. Spirit through baptism. Mysticism is the increased awareness of the presence of the Spirit within and the clear vision of the image of God. We saw, moreover, that this teaching is based on the words of Jesus and on the writing of St. John and St. Paul.

Again, according to the great oriental mystic St. Simeon, mysticism is a fuller possession of the H. Spirit by the baptism of the Spirit, a deeper awareness of Jesus as Lord and Saviour living within the Christian. This gives freedom from the passions as the attraction for the things of the world is cut asunder while the soul gives itself completely to God forgetting itself, enjoying peace and tranquillity. The entire person is immersed in the Spirit enjoying ineffable sweetness and joy so that the whole body feels its effects. The last stage of union, the betrothal of the Holy Spirit, is inexplicable according to Simeon, for it is comprehended incomprehensibility.

Now let us see how far the Indian Mind as reflected in the sacred writings of the Hindus is open to mysticism. There are two approaches to the ultimate reality or two kinds of experience of the ultimate reality, the personal and the impersonal. As a mystical approach to reality, the impersonal dominates at first. This mystic experience of the beyond,

the supra-phenomenal is found, as we saw, to words the end of the Brahmanas and in the earlier upanishads. The individual atman (the living principle in man) is identical with the cosmic atman or Brahman the supreme reality. To know Atman or Brahman is to become that reality. Then there is no more subject-object distinction, everything becomes one's own self, one becomes the all and multiplicity ceases to exist. This is the state of peace and bliss. Similarities to Christian mysticism are:- (1) Experience of the beyond (2) Experience of unity (3) cessation of multiplicity (4) experience of peace and bliss. The differences from Christian mysticism are:- (1) There is no experience or consciousness of God or union with the divine because it is an experience of non-dualism, the self or Atman is conscious of itself alone. Or to put it in other words, in Christian mysticism the creaturely existence is never forgotten; ontologically the creature remains a finite being distinct from the divine even when it is elevated to the divine level by the activity of the Spirit. Even at the experiential level, there is distinction of the soul from the divine, the soul experiences God as its inner principle, as one with it. (2) This, the highest state, is attained by one's own effort in advaitic mysticism whereas it is a result of divine action in Christian mysticism.

The personal mystical approach to reality is found in the latter upanishads as a strong trend while it is played down in the earlier upanishads. 1) The first important similarity between this Indian mysticism and the oriental Christian mysticism is the experience of the presence of the supreme being within the heart of man. The supreme is seen as one's inner principle. Real life is interior life. (2) This supreme being is seen as personal. (3) The experience of the supreme being liberates man, filling

him with eternal peace and joy. Then man is no more attracted by the world. (4) This is the supreme goal of life. (5) Ascetical practices are necessary to attain this state.

There are some notable differences also. Oriental mysticism is the Christian experience of the presence of the H. Spirit and the presence of Christ in oneself. This experience cannot be acquired by human effort, it can only be produced by the indwelling Spirit. Though there is union, and merging of consciousness, the creaturely condition is not forgotten, is not eliminated. The body is always an integral part of man.

Indian mysticism is the experience of a divine being. This experience

can be acquired by the effort of man. Of course, there is a theory stating that divine action is needed but it is not well substantiated. Since the soul is eternal and uncreated like the divine being (sveta u. 1, 9), it is difficult to determine if it is distinct from the divine after its union with the divine.

In spite of these differences there is a convergence of attitudes and great similarity between the Indian Mind and Oriental Mysticism. The mystical is the fundamental trait, so to say, a passion, of the Indian Mind. It spontaneously seeks the Transcendent. It seeks the Supreme Being which is the inner principle of man, as does the Oriental Christian mystic.

Rev. Dr. Gabriel Aranjaniyil CMI

Rev. Dr. James Aerthayil CMI

## Documentation

Excerpts from the message of  
**His Eminence D. Simon Card. Lourdusamy**  
to St. Thomas Ap. Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam  
and to the Paurastya Vidyapitham on the  
occasion of the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Seminary.

In these hours we, who are gathered here at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, are celebrating an event, a kind of a "kairos" memory and mystery an event which occurred some twenty-five years ago."

... In you I see the future of the Church of the St. Thomas Christians, who kept the lamp of Faith alive for two millennia already and who have spread this Faith far beyond their native purlieus, ... and who now prepare themselves to meet the Third Millennium, fraught with immense challenges and pregnant with shatteringly bright possibilities. ...

... In twenty-five years this Seminary has established itself as one of the principal centres of Indian theological thought and priestly formation, a privileged expression of the life of the Syro-Malabar Church. This achievement is due to the special care of the Holy See on your behalf and, necessarily, to the zealous efforts of your own Bishops and, especially, of the Seminary Staff who have given unstintingly of their time and energies.

... The Seminary was the fruit of the vision of a great lover of your Church, His Eminence Eugene Cardinal Tisserant; but not only of this great Cardinal ... Then was in Rome at that time Fr. Placid Podipara, CMI, as Consultor to the Oriental Congregation. Closer home, the Carmelite Fathers at St. Joseph's Pontifical Seminary were likewise acutely alive to the need of a new Seminary. ...

... Hence, its particular concern with the true ecclesial heritage of this Individual Church of Apostolic origin. Hence, its cultivation of the sources of the ecclesial tradition, the 'lex orandi' or the liturgical patrimony, but also of the more modest expressions of the same tradition. There is also the tradition of popular piety, close to the liturgy, and this is reflected here by the sobriety, the modesty, the earnestness of your life-style.

Out of this Seminary has emerged the twin institution of the PAURASTYA VIDYAPITHAM, Pontifical Oriental Institute of Religious Studies. Out of this Seminary have emerged 580 Priests. Some of the Professors are now Bishops (of Palai, Sultan Bathery, Kothamangalam,...)

Anyone with the slightest acquaintance with the history of the Oriental Churches, and especially of the East Syrian Church, of which you have inherited tradition, is impressed by the honour in which the sacred sciences were held: not only in the catechetical schools around the Cathedral Churches, but also in the monastic centres, side by side with the urge for solitary contemplative prayer.

So, this Institution at the heart of the Syro-Malabar Church is really fulfilling a vital function, necessary to every Church, and most appropriate to your Church. Here the tradition is renewed, here is Edessa re-born....

On July 3, 1982 -on the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle -this institution was erected as an independent Theological Faculty, empowered to confer the degrees of Bachelor of Theology, Master of Theology and Doctor of Theology.

As your specific aim, you seek to "cultivate and promote through scientific research the patrimony of Christian wisdom of both East and West with special emphasis on Biblical, Patristic, Oriental, Syrian and Indian traditions". ... If the rich plurality of legitimate tradition were to be cast away and diluted in an ocean of indifferentiation, the Church would be hopelessly impoverished and, indeed, de-naturalized. The Holy Father has more than once spoken of the Church as needing to breathe with its two lungs, meaning both East and West. It is important to know both traditions; it is shameful, and a disservice to the Church, to ignore or despise one's native, Oriental tradition.

... Oriental Christian Studies are practically neglected in the curricula of our Major Seminaries and Theological Faculties. That is why I feel you have a national role to play in the field of Christian ecclesiastical sciences. It is a challenge to you, for you to pick up. And it is your special responsibility to be assumed in the spirit of ecclesial service. ...

# Catholic Bishops' Conference of India

Circular: To the members of the  
Hierarchy of India

Archbishop's house  
21 N Parekh Marg  
Bombay 400 039  
July 2, 1987

AH:B.6

AH:B.14

Your Excellency,

By his letter dated June 4, 1986, His Eminence Cardinal Agostino Casaroli informed us that the Holy Father had appointed a special commission for a study of the inter-ritual questions in the church in India. The Indian members of this commission were: Archbishop Simon Pimenta, Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios, OIC, Archbishop Antony Padiyara and Archbishop Henry D'Souza. The Commission was set up to examine the following matters:

1. the spiritual and pastoral assistance of the Eastern Rite faithful in Latin Rite circumscriptions;
2. the Eastern churches and evangelization outside their territories;
3. the churches of Eastern rite and the Indian Episcopal conference

## The Commission met in Rome in June 1986

The Holy Father has now graciously addressed a special Letter dated May 28, 1987, to the *Bishops of India*. This Letter was presented to the Indian members of the Commission by His Excellency, the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio, at a meeting at Archbishop's house, Bombay on July 2, 1987. A copy of this letter I am enclosing here with. The letter of the Holy Father gives directives on the three areas of concern mentioned above. The Letter is also rich with well-integrated motivations of a historical, theological, canonical and pastoral nature. The Holy Father invites us to reflect on the marvellous mystery of the Universal Church and all the Churches or Rites which make up her variety in unity, and reminds us of the need for the closest possible communication and collaboration between the different rites.

Concerning the directives, the CBCI will do what is within its competence for the implementation of the same. In general, let us keep in mind the confidence reposed in us by the Holy Father: that what he has stated in his Letter may be given the full support of all the bishops of the country and that we will do everything possible to educate and form our priests, religious and faithful to accept and co-operate fully in its implementation.  
With every good wish,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ Simon I. Pimenta  
Archbishop of Bombay  
and President,  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of India

## Book Reviews

*Adolf Fugel: Christen unterm Roten Stern. Dokumentationen -- Berichte -- Lebensbilder.*  
Freiburg - Basel - Wien: Herder, 1985, 128 pages, DM 7.90.

This small booklet of Romania - born German Fr. A. Fugel who is now parish priest at Wangen, Switzerland, is not only informative, but will also stir up the mind of the reader. He should become conscious of how are the conditions of life which Christians have to face under the Communist régime. After having first presented the roots of the present situation which are connected with the names of Karl Marx, Lenin and Stalin, he shows the relation between the communist ideology and religion in the different countries of Eastern Europe. The author's particular interest is devoted to his own native country. In the last chapter, he is making a strong appeal to all Christians living in liberty to show solidarity with their persecuted brethren. Would many of us listen attentively to this voice and rightly act and react.

J. Madey

*Nicholas Uspensky: Evening Worship in the Orthodox Church.* Translated from the Russian and edited by Paul Lazor, Crestwood, New York 10707: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985, 248 pp., £ 11.25 (Distributed by A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd, Saint Thomas House, Becket Street, Oxford OX1 ISJ, England).

The author is one of the great old theologians of the Russian Orthodox Church today and the most eminent specialist in the field of Liturgy and liturgical music. The three parts of this book appeared between 1959 and 1976 in different volumes of the "Bogoslovskie Trudy" in Russian and have so far not been practically available in the West. Therefore this translation will certainly be welcome to any student of liturgy, for the now 85 years old author reveals the purpose for which the service of vespers came to existence. In the first chapter, he presents a liturgical history of the Vespers making evident its sources in the Old Testament and in the Primitive Church. The second chapter concentrates on history and practice of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts now celebrated during the Great Lent on Wednesdays and Fridays in the Byzantine rite, while in other rites this practice is not so much developed or has been given up. Uspensky stresses the rôle of (St.) Severus of Antioch in this regard. In the third chapter, the author is dealing with the collision of two theologies - the original Eastern one and the Western influence - in the revision of Russian liturgical books in the 17th century. We warmly recommend this book to everybody wishing to get deeper insight in the Church's worship and its development.

J. Madey

*Stephen Gero, Barsauma of Nisibis and Persian Christianity in the Fifth Century, (CSCO 426/Subsidia 63), Louvain, 1981.*

In this remarkable study Stephen Gero is trying to assess the true importance of Bishop Barsauma of Nisibis. In the Monophysite circles Barsauma is depicted as a Nestorian fanatic and even in the Nestorian circles, he did not get his due place. Because of his struggle with the Seleucian Catholicoi Babowai and Acacius, he is a suspect figure in the main body of Persian Christianity. However, he is to be distinguished from a certain Monophysite Barsauma,

who propagated the anti-Chalcedonian cause in West Asia. After explaining the fifth century background of Persian Christianity, the author analyses the life of Barsauma under three headings: Barsauma and the School of Nisibis, Barsauma and the catholicos, Barsauma and the Ethical reforms. Barsauma is the chief instrument in the appointment of Narsai in the School of Nisibis. When Narsai ran away from the School of Edessa, he wanted to go still further in the East. But Barsauma succeeded in persuading him to remain in Nisibis to take up the charge of the School. Barsauma's relations with the Catholicoi were not cordial. He even dared to conduct a schismatic Synod in 484 at Bet-Lapat. He gave leadership to the discontented elements in the Persian Christianity against the Catholicos of Seleucia. Finally, Barsauma introduced clerical marriage: i. e. permission was granted to clerics, monks and nuns to marry. However, this question is exaggerated in the subsequent histories. He himself married an ex-nun Mamai. The last part of the book contains three appendices: one related to the martyrdom of Catholicos Babowai. The author concludes that Barsauma cannot be accused of the murder of the Catholicos.

This small but very important book is a contribution to the study of the evolution of Christianity in Persia in the 5th century. All the available information regarding the life and works of Barsauma is here collected and analysed.

G. Chediath

**A. Vööbus, (ed. & tr.), The Canons Ascribed to Marutha of Maipherqat and Related Sources (CSCO 439-440/ Scriptores Syri 191-192), Louvain, 1982.**

A. Vööbus is publishing here in Syriac and English translation in two volumes the "Pseudo-Nicene Canons" or "the Canons ascribed to Marutha" and the Canons of the Council of Nice and a few related texts. For the "Canons of Marutha" he has based on Ms. Alqos 169 (A) and for the others Ms. Vat. Syr. 501 (B). In the introduction to the texts the editor speaks about the various mss. related to the topic. According to him it is almost the last part of a long ranged project of editing and publishing canonical laws related to the Syrian Churches. He has already edited monastic canons, canons for novices, statutes, synodial canons, conciliar canons, manual of discipline, civil laws and Islamic laws in Syriac. In the introduction to the translation, he gives the "background of the Canons" and the "Origin of the Canons". Under Jazdgard I, the Persian King, and Arcadius, the Byzantine Emperor, there existed friendly relations between the Persian and the Roman Empires. Marutha bishop of the Syrian-Armenian border town Maipherqat, and Mar Isaac the Seleucian Catholicos gave the leadership to convene a Synod of the Persian bishops in 410 at Seleucia. In that Synod, the Persian Church officially accepted the Creed of Nicaea and promulgated 21 canons. In addition to these canons the acts of the Synod speaks of a "volume" of canons presented by Marutha and accepted by the Synod. It may be a collection of canons from the Syriac Churches in the Eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire. Marutha might have modified them according to the need of the Church in Persia. All the materials in the present form need not be from Marutha. It is possible that in the subsequent generations, certain additions might have been made to the collection of Marutha. Any how, several canons of this collection are common to the Eastern churches. These volumes contain these canons (73). A. Vööbus has done a very valuable service in publishing these canons in Syriac and English.

G. Chediath

*Das heilige Russland. 1000 Jahre Russisch-Orthodoxe Kirche.* Freiburg-Basel Wien: Herder, 1987, 280 pp. +116 illustrations etc., DM 49, 80.

This large volume is a masterpiece of modern arts of printing. Edited on the occasion of the millenium of the baptism of Prince Vladimir of Kiev, it is prefaced by the Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow Pimen, the President of the Office for Foreign Relations of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) H J. Held, and the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Cardinal F. Wetter. The authors of the contributions are Protestants as well as Roman Catholics. The illustrations are superb and most instructive. All the contributions are written for the large public. Their topics are comprising history, arts, veneration of icons, biographies of a few great theologians and saints, devotion to Our Lady, liturgy, liturgical chant, ecumenical contacts with the R. C. Church and with the EKD, the other churches and ecclesial communities in Russia and the USSR, the religious life of the laity today. The reader gets a lot of informations about the Russian Orthodox Church, however he must read the different contributions with a critic mind. Some of them reveal rather a sentimental form of today's widely spread ecumenism which certainly may please Russian ecclesiastical authorities, but nevertheless give a one-sided view. What is striking is the indiscriminate use of the adjective "Russian" as a derivation of the modern meaning of "Russia" and not of the historical Rus', even if territories and persons are described who would be called today Byelorussian or Ukrainian. In fact, Prince Vladimir was not the ruler of Russia, but of the Kievan Rus' which comprised Byelorussian and Ukrainian lands. Muscovy (Great Russia) entered into history only in the 12th century. We actually do not know exactly when Great Russia whose centre is Moscow embraced the Christian faith. Hence what we are celebrating in 1988 is not the millenium of the Russian Orthodox Church, but that of the Church in the ancient Rus' of Kiev! This Church was part of the undivided Church in narrow relationship with its mother church of Constantinople. Only from the 17th cent. onwards it has come under its daughter church of Moscow (more or less forced!) which had obtained the rank of patriarchate a little earlier. Ukrainians and Byelorussians should be regarded (and this is not said in the book) the first born heirs of the ancient church of Kiev. It would therefore be better not to use a sub-title "1000 Years - Russian Orthodox Church" which is historically doubtful. Historically wrong is also Msgr. Rauch's assertion when he speaks of the 'solution of the issue of the Uniates', i.e. the Ukrainian Catholics: "In the territories of the present Soviet Union there were large Greek - Catholic, i. e. Uniate ecclesiastical districts (!) which are now again placed under the Russian Orthodox Church" (p. 208). They never had belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church. When the Union of Brest was concluded, they had been in communion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. It is from there that they changed their ecclesial relationship. The forced liquidation of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in 1946 is mentioned only once (p. 245) by a Protestant author in rather an objective way - Despite all the critical annotations, it has to be said that this volume can instruct the reader in many aspects and could serve as a model for other volumes presenting the different individual churches.

J. Madey

## Books Received

ANTONEICH R,

*Christians in the face of the Justice. A Latin American Reading of Catholic Social teaching* (Maryknoll, N Y: Orbis books, 1980) \$. 12. 95

ARISTI V. V and others,

*Das Papstamt. Dienst Oder Hindernis für die ökumene?* (Regensburg: verlag Pustet, 1985).

BERZONSKY V.

*The Gift of Love* (Crestwood, N. Y: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1985 (available through: Oxford: MOWBRAY) £ 8. 75

CANIVET P,

*Le Monachisme Syrien Selon Théodore de Cyr* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977)

CLEARY E. L,

*Crisis and change. The Church in Latin America Today* (Maryknoll, NY: orbis books, 1985)

CLEMENT O,

*ORIENT - OCCIDENT. DEUX PASSEURS: Vladimir Lossky and Paul Evdokimov* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1985)

DERR T. S.,

*Barriers to Ecumenism. The Holy See and world Council of Churches on Social questions* (Indore: Sat Prakashan, 1984) Rs 16/-

DONDERS T. G,

*Non-bourgeois theology. An African experience of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 1985)

FERNANDO P,

*Socio-pastoral dimensions of priestly formation* (Indore: Satprakasham, 1984)

KESICH L. W. and V,

*Treasures of the Holy Land. A visit to the places of Christian origins* (Crest wood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1985 (available through : Oxford: MOWBRAY and Co.) £ 8.75

LINK H. G. (ed),

*The roots of our common faith. Faith in the scriptures and in the early church* (geneva: WCC, 1984) \$ 13.90

- MAC DONELL C. L., *After communion*, (London : MOWBRAY: 1985).
- MAYNARD-RED P. U., *Poverty and Wealth in James* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 1987) \$ 8.95.
- MUZOREWA G. H., *The Origins and Development of African Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 1985)
- NEWBIGIN L., *The Good shepherd meditations on christian ministry in today's world*. (London: MOWBRAY, 1977).
- PAOLI A., *Gather Together in my Name. Reflections on Christianity and community* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 1987) \$ 9.95.
- PAYNGOT C., *The Syro-Malabar Marriage* (Extractum : *La celebrazione Christiana del matrimonio*). (Roma 1986) pp. 261-82
- POBEE J. S. and Vonwartenberg - potter B (eds), *New Eyes for Reading. Biblical and theological reflections by women for the third world* (Geneva: wcc 1986)
- SHUTTE H., *Ziel Kirchweggemeinschaft. Zur ökumenischen Orientierung* (paderborn : Verlag Bonifatius, 1985)
- TIMIADIS E., *The Nicene Creed, Our common faith* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1983) \$ 6.95
- TRAVIS J., *In defense of the Faith. The theology of Patriarch Nikephores of Constantinople* (Brookline, mass : Hellenic College Press, 1986)
- TRONMPF G. W (ed), *The Gospel is not Western. Black Theologies from the pacific* (Maryknoll, N. Y: orbis books, 1987) \$ 17.95
- URBAN H. J and WAGNER H (eds), *Hand book der ökumenik* (band II) (Paderborn : virlag Bonifatius, 1986).

# News

## 1. Arbitrary Celebration of the Liturgy

In an address to the Austrian Bishops come in Rome for their "Ad Limina" in June 1987, His Holiness Pope John Paul II asked them to be careful, among other things, in the celebration of the Eucharist and Penance. The Pope said: The Eucharist must never be handed over to the option of an arbitrary celebration. It has its greatness not through celebrations but through *that which it is*. It is correctly celebrated then and only then, when the priest and community do not seek after *their own particular form* but give themselves over entirely to the intrinsic demands of the liturgy of the Church itself and seek on their part to be faithful to it in their conscience".

## 2. Seminar on Priestly Formation

A two-day seminar on *Priestly Formation* was conducted on 11-12 August, 1987 at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam, India. It was to mark the conclusion of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Seminary. The celebration was inaugurated with an *International Theological Symposium* in July 1986. This time the Seminar was specifically intended for those involved in priestly and religious formation. The topics discussed were: The Ecclesial Formation of a Priest; The Priestly Formation to meet the Pastoral Exigencies of Today; Liturgical Formation and Priestly Training; Intellectual Formation; Psychological Development and Priestly Formation; and Spirituality of a diocesan Priest. The emphasis in priestly formation should be ecclesial. To this one should know one's own Church, its heritages etc., and also other Churches. The knowledge of one's own Church and other Churches should not make them indifferent. The formation should aim at giving them a deep ecclesial experience. Any formation and spirituality that is not liturgically based is not genuine and will be harmful. Hence, care should be taken to give them a correct, authentic, and orderly celebration of the liturgy, together with the theoretical teaching during seminary life.

The modern priest must be all the more psychologically mature. All possible means must be employed in assisting seminarians to become mature human persons. The ultimate aim of the formation must be to form priests who can meet the pastoral needs of today. They are called to witness to Christ in a world that either questions or denies everything. They should be men of authentic spirituality - ecclesial and liturgical. The seminar was the first of its kind in Kerala.

## 3. Seminary concludes its Silver Jubilee

St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary of Kottayam, India concluded formally its silver jubilee celebrations on 13th August 1987. A concluding public meeting was held in Card. Tisserant Hall of the Seminary. The meeting was

presided over by His Grace Mar Antony Padiyara, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Ernakulam. Among these present were Mar Joseph Powathil, Metropolitan Archbishop of Changanacherry, and Benedict Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan Archbishop of Trivandrum, several bishops, Monsignori, Priests, former Rectors, Rectors and Superiors of Seminaries and Houses of Formation, Laymen and Laywomen. Cardinal Lourdusamy gave the Jubilee Message. His Eminence said: "In Twenty-five years this Seminary has established itself as one of the principal centres of Indian theological thought and priestly formation, a privileged expression of the life of the Syro-Malabar Church". This achievement is due to the care of the Holy See, of the Bishops, and especially of the Seminary Staff. The late Card. Tisserant and Fr. Placid C.M.I. were specially remembered by the Cardinal. The service of the Carmelite Fathers of St. Joseph's Seminary, Alwaye was also mentioned. In his address, the Cardinal referred to the particular concern this seminary should have "with the true ecclesial heritage of this Individual Church of Apostolic origin". The sources of the ecclesial tradition, the liturgical patrimony have to be cultivated, the Cardinal reminded. His Eminence praised the Seminary for its work of last 25 years, and for the institution of Paurastya Vidyapitham in the Seminary. About this Institution the Cardinal remarked "this institution at the heart of Syro-Malabar Church is really fulfilling a vital function, necessary to every Church, and most appropriate to your Church. Here the tradition is renewed, here is Edessa re-born". He also pointed to the path to be taken in research: "If the rich plurality of legitimate tradition were to be cast away and diluted in an ocean of indifference, the Church would be hopelessly impoverished and, indeed, de-naturalized... it is important to know both traditions; it is shameful, and a disservice to the Church, to ignore or despise one's native, Oriental tradition". May St. Thomas the Apostle guide this Seminary and Institute through the specific path it has been called to open and walk.

#### 4. Cardinal Lourdusamy in Kerala

His Eminence Card. D. S. Lourdusamy, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches made an official visit to the Oriental Eparchies in Kerala. The occasion of his visit coincided with the Centenary celebrations of the establishment of the Vicariates for the Syro-Malabar Church; the Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to all the Bishops of India on the inter-ecclesial problem; the confusions and controversies existing in the Syro-Malabar Church because of the sacred Liturgy; the Silver Jubilée of the Episcopal Consecration of His Eminence, etc.

This official visit was a unique opportunity for the Prefect to know this Apostolic Church, feel her problems, analyse and evaluate their reasons correctly. As some of the local media made it clear, several memoranda have been given to the Prefect. Liturgy is one of the issues. All look forward to a solution.

Familiaris Consortio of Pope John Paul II boldly states in art. 5: "The 'supernatural sense of faith' however does not consist solely or necessarily in the *consensus* of the faithful. Following Christ, the Church seeks the truth, which is not *always* the same as the *majority opinion*". Liturgy is something sacred and it is the celebration of the faith of the Church. It is clear that the faith of the Church is not to be decided by any consent of the faithful or majority opinion. The Church has always been consistent in her teaching and

discipline on Liturgy. The present state of affairs in the Syro-Malabar Church is far from the ideal. The following data reveal the important steps in the restoration of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy.

- December 1. 1934** - Pope Pius XI took the initiative and declared his decision to restore the Syro-Malabar Liturgy. Later a Pontifical Commission was set up for it.
- March 10. 1954** - A liturgical commission was instituted in Rome for the restoration of the Qurbana.
- May 6. 1954** - Congregation for Oriental Churches informed the bishops and the Internuncio that the decision had been taken to restore the Qurbana.
- May 27. 1957** - Plenary session of the Oriental Congregation approved the restored text.
- June 26. 1957** - Pope Pius XII approved the restored Qurbana.
- November 16. 1959** - The letter of the Oriental Congregation says that the Pope John XXIII also approved the text.
- 1959** - Oriental Congregation published in Rome 'Ordo Celebrazione Qudase juxta usum Ecclesiae Syro-Malabarensis'.
- 1960** - 'Supplementum Mysteriorum Sive Proprium de Tempore et de Sanctis juxta Ritum Ecclesiae Syro-Malabarensium' was published in Rome.
- May 2. 1960** - Syriac Taksa d' Qudasa with the imprimatur of Mar Joseph Parecattil was published in Alwaye.
- January 20. 1962** - The decree "De Ritu Sacrificili Eucharistici instaurato" gave more practical norms regarding the celebration of the Qurbana.
- July 3. 1962** - The restored Qurbana with partial Malayalam translation was introduced in the Church. A common pastoral was read out in Churches.
- December 3. 1963** - Decretum de Celebrando Quddasa ex ritu Syro-Malabarensi permitted to leave certain prayers optional.
- August 6. 1968** - A re-latinized and mutilated text already printed was submitted by Mar George Alapatt to the Oriental Congregation for approval.
- August 7. 1968** - Congr. approved it *ad experimentum* without any study of the text.
- August 15. 1968** - The new text came into force in the Syro-Malabar church.
- May 9. 1969** - Oriental Congregation studied the new text and limited its experimentation to two years.
- July 23. 1971** - Oriental Congregation extended the experiment for three more years with the clause "*sine prejudicio futurae decisionis Sanctae Sedis*".

- August 1. 1972** - Oriental Congregation gave the direction that experimentation and studies should be in accordance with the norms and decrees of Apostolic See and the guidance of the competent authority.
- June 19. 1974** - Oriental Congregation declares the experiment of the 1968 text as concluded and reposed the 1962 text. Any discussion regarding the adaptation etc. should be on the basis of 1962 text.
- June 14. 1975** - Oriental Congregation prohibited the use of the "Indian Mass" and experiments of abusive Indianization" started by H. Em. Joseph Cardinal Parecattil
- January 3. 1977** - Holy See prohibited the use of new liturgical texts or compositions that lacked the authorization of the bishops' conference and the approval of the Holy See.
- June 23. 1978** - Oriental Congregation reiterated its decision that 1962 text is to remain the normative and basis text, which any ulterior discussion must presuppose. Liturgical texts such as short Mass and Indian Mass, lacking proper and due authorization are prohibited.
- May 22. 1979** - Oriental Congregation informs Card. Parecattil that the experimental phase, at one time granted and later prorogated must immediately be brought to end.
- August 12. 1980** - "Report on the state of liturgical reform in the Syro-Malabar Church" given by the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches Rome. It gives fundamental doctrinal principles for an authentic liturgical reform and comments on the Indian Mass and the Indianized Mass (Dharmaram) which are declared unacceptable.
- August 28. 1980** - Pope John Paul II addressed the Hierarchs and gave fundamental principles for the Syro-Malabar liturgical reform.
- August 30. 1980** - Card. Rubin gave further directives for the formation of the new text.
- March 1. 1983** - "Observations on the order of the Holy Mass of the Syro-Malabar Church 1981" was issued by the Congr. for the Oriental Churches.
- August 3. 1984** - Letter of the oriental congregation to the administrator of the Archdiocese of Ernakulam, prohibiting use of the unauthorized liturgical books in the archdiocese.
- March 12 - 13. 1985** - A special episcopal committee was appointed to prepare the Qurbana text.
- July 24. 1985** - Oriental Congregation issued the document. "Final judgment of the S. Congregation for the Oriental Churches concerning the order of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana".

- November 8. 1985** - Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference forwarded the draft text of the Qurbana to Rome for approval.
- December 19. 1985** - The Qurbana text was approved by the Holy see.
- December 21. 1985** - The decree of the approval of the Qurbana was officially given to the Archbishops and bishops
- February 8. 1986** - Pope John Paul II solemnly inaugurated the new text of Holy Qurbana at Kottayam on the occasion of the Beatification.
- June 4. 1986** - The Syro-Malabar Bishop's Conference resolved to use the restored text in all its three forms (Most solemn, Solemn and simple) \*

The decisions of Rome have not been implemented in some section of this Church; and that has caused confusion. It is the duty of all concerned to intervene effectively and put an end to the strange situation of indecision and confusion in the Syro-Malabar Church. In a tragic situation like this the people turn to the See of Peter for its consistent guidance and effective action.

##### 5. New Diocese at Kottappuram

A new diocese has been erected at Kottappuram, near Cranganore, in India, bifurcating the latin archdiocese of Verapoly. Fr. Francis Kallarackal 46, has been nominated the first bishop of the new diocese. Ordained in 1968, he was the administrator of St. John's Medical College, Bangalore.

---

\* Cfr. Dr. Thomas Manoorampampil, Historical Note of the Restoration of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana, Kottayam 1986, p. 1-6.